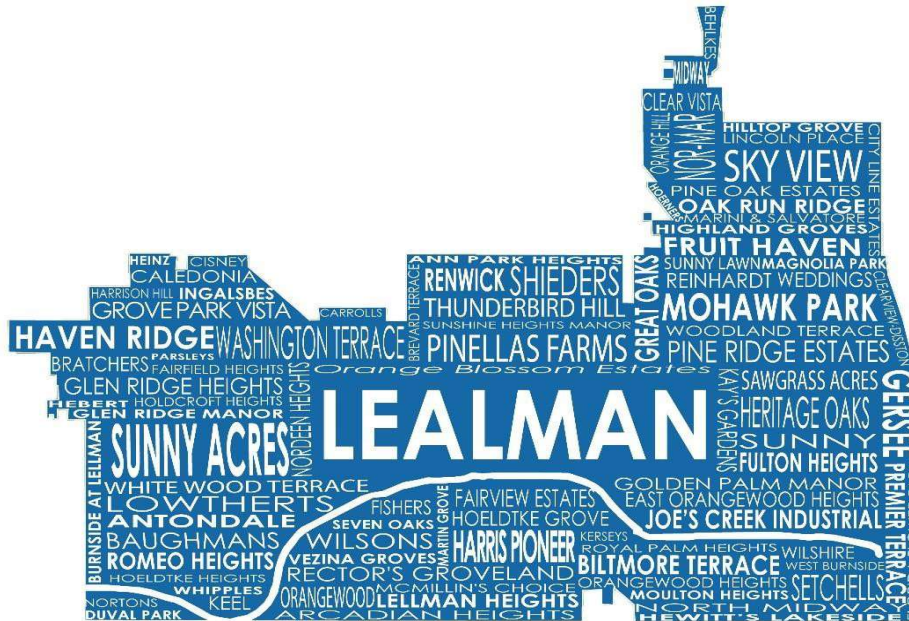




Lealman Community Redevelopment Area Commercial Improvement Program Guidelines and Application Package Effective 2026



Supporting documents may be submitted electronically or via hand delivery to:

Cameron Ehmgig
CRA Specialist
(727) 464-5411
Cehmgig@pinellas.gov
Lealman Exchange 5175 45th Street N, Building A
Lealman, Florida 33714

Use our on-line application portal:

<https://pinellas.gov/programs/lealman-commercial-improvement-grant-program/>

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Lealman, Florida 33714



OVERVIEW

The Lealman CRA Commercial Improvement Program is intended to provide reimbursable matching grants to accelerate and leverage private investment to improve the appearance, condition, and functionality of properties with an approved non-residential use in the Lealman Community Redevelopment Area (CRA).

Main Requirements:

- All improvements should noticeably improve the functionality or appearance of the business.
- Routine and deferred maintenance items will not be eligible for funding.
- Funds may not be used for any projects already completed or in progress.
- Contractors must be licensed, as applicable, and permits must be pulled and finalized before reimbursement

The program provides reimbursable matching grants to property owners and businesses for the following categories or types of improvements:

- 1) **Exterior:** Improvements to the building façade to enhance curb appeal and functionality
- 2) **Site:** Improvements to the parking lot, service/loading area, free-standing signs, landscaping, and stormwater management
- 3) **Interior:** Improvements that enhance interior appeal, as well as improvements that enhance business functionality (utilities, plumbing, electrical)
- 4) **Food-Service/Grocery:** Installation of permanent food-service equipment and infrastructure

The list of eligible improvements can be found later in this document.

Architectural, engineering, permitting, and development review fee reimbursements are capped at \$5,000 per application. These fees are only reimbursable in combination with other improvements, and must have been completed within the prior 12 months to the application date.

The category dedicated to food-service/grocery is intended for existing restaurants to expand their space, for new property owners to change their building’s use to food service, or for grocery stores that sell fresh food. New food-service businesses may be asked to provide a business plan, tentative menu, and/or other supporting documentation.

GRANT FUND AMOUNTS

The maximum award amount for is up to \$100,000, with interior and food-service/grocery improvements being limited to \$25,000 for each category or type of improvements.

Grant awards can be approved, as shown in the table below:

Award Limit	Improvements Categories
\$100,000	Any combination of categories. Interior and food-service/grocery improvements are limited to



	\$25,000 each.
\$25,000	Only Interior Improvements
\$25,000	Only food-service Improvements

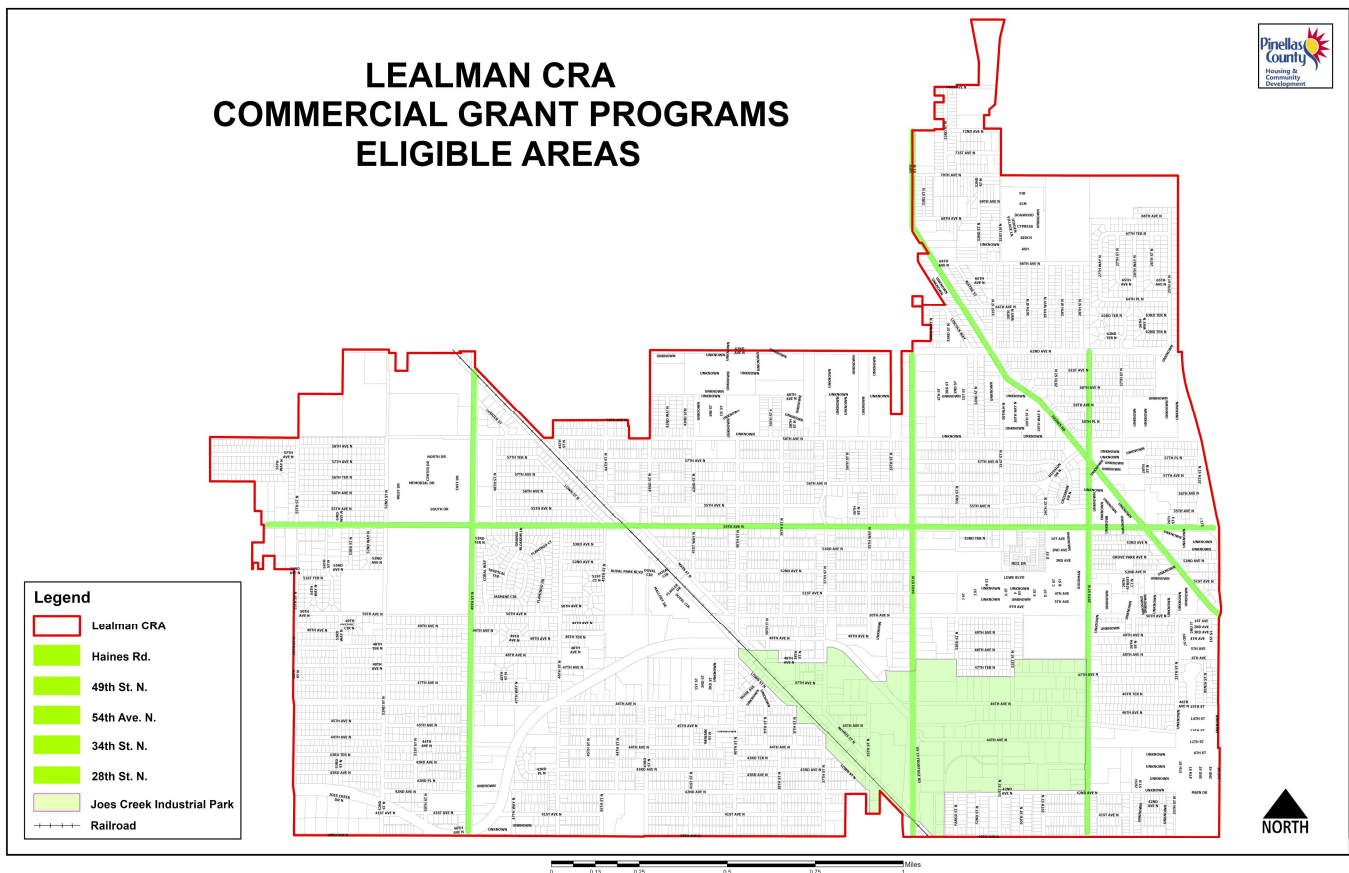
PROPERTY ELIGIBILITY

All structurally sound, properly permitted buildings in the Joe’s Creek Industrial Park or property with an approved non-residential use and has frontage on the following commercial corridors within the Lealman CRA boundary are eligible:

- 49th Street North
- 54th Avenue North
- 34th Street North
- Haines Road
- 28th Street North

Please see the map below for the Joe’s Creek Industrial Park boundary and eligible commercial corridors.

Commercial Improvement Program Eligibility Map



APPLICANT ELIGIBILITY

The Lealman CRA Commercial Improvement Program is available to fund eligible site, interior and exterior improvements on properties with approved nonresidential uses that meet application eligibility requirements. The grant may also be used for improving, expanding, or opening up a new food service establishment or grocery store selling fresh food.

Businesses that lease their location may apply if they have written and notarized approval from the building owner.

Applicants must be able to demonstrate (with assistance provided by County staff):

- Ownership of the property.
- Business Owner with a minimum 5-year lease and notarized written approval from property owner.
- Property is in the Lealman CRA of Pinellas County.
- Property is current on all property taxes, not in foreclosure, and has no outstanding liens or Code Enforcement violations. If the work proposed would remediate all code violations, this requirement may be waived at discretion of CRA staff.

- Property has not received a Lealman CRA Commercial Improvement Program grant in the last five years if the building use or ownership remains the same, three years if the building use or ownership changed.
- *Locally independently owned and operated franchises*: Owner must reside in the Tampa Bay Metropolitan Statistical Area. National corporate franchises are not eligible.
- *Non-profit organizations* must provide proof of tax-exemption under 26 U.S. Code 501 requirements and any licenses or certifications required to provide their services.
- If the organization is *faith-based*, the project must be for a secular purpose and cannot advance or inhibit religion.

Ineligible businesses: national corporate franchises, bail/bonds, pawn shops, smoke shops, electronic or vapor cigarette stores, mini-storage facilities, adult-oriented businesses, mobile vendors, places of worship, organizations exempt from property taxes

Lealman CRA Commercial Improvement Program Eligible and Ineligible Activities

Eligible Exterior Improvements

- Exterior painting when paired with:
 - New or replacement siding
 - Masonry work
 - Remove, restore, or add architectural details or features on exterior of building
- Awnings, shutters, and canopies installation or replacement
- Flood proofing for properties in a floodplain
- Doors and windows installation or replacement (including loading dock/garage doors; costs associated with changing size of openings)
- New roof and painting for building addition
- Replacement roof for entire building when combined with a significant business expansion resulting in building addition
- Exterior lighting attached to an existing building
- New installation or replacement of exterior signage attached to the building and/or on windows (Reimbursement for signage expenses are limited to 25% of the grant award.)
- Architectural, engineering, permitting, and development review fees. (Matching reimbursement only upon completion of improvements)

Ineligible Exterior Improvements

- Roof repair; roof replacement, except for expansions and new construction
- Routine or deferred maintenance
- Repair of doors, windows, and signage
- Painting when not accompanied by other work as shown
- Improvements to any buildings located in a residential zone or to any portion of the building used for residential purposes
- Work performed by an unlicensed contractor when license is required
- Improvements performed before the approval of the grant application

Eligible Site Improvements

- Stormwater improvements (improvements could include the reduction of impervious surface area such as removing unneeded pavement areas and convert to drainage areas/green space or the conversion of impervious to pervious surface(s) to better manage stormwater on property; improvements could also include green infrastructure and/or subsurface vault systems needed on-site towards stormwater management and/or treatment to comply with stormwater regulations)
- New and replacement fencing (chain link is ineligible), dumpster enclosures, and buffer walls
- Parking lots, parking spaces, service/loading areas, sidewalks, pathways, and lighting (includes ADA-compliant improvements)
- Landscaping and irrigation (no sod allowed, must be Native or “Florida-Friendly” plants and pre-approved by Pinellas County). Landscaping is limited to \$2,500. This limit may be waived with County staff approval if the landscaping is integral to green infrastructure stormwater management enhancements (including but not limited to rain gardens, bio-swales, etc.)
- Construction of driveway access, pedestrian, and bicycle amenities such as benches, shelters, bike racks, and bike lockers
- New installation or replacement of exterior signage, including monument and pole signs advertising the business name and identity. (Reimbursement for signage expenses are limited to 25% of the grant award.)
- Demolition
- Sewer/Potable water utility relocation.
- Architectural, engineering, permitting, and development review fees (Matching reimbursement only upon completion of improvements)

Ineligible Site Improvements

- Work performed by an unlicensed contractor when license is required
- Improvements performed before the approval of the grant application
- Building improvements
- Routine or deferred maintenance
- Improvements to buildings primarily used for residences, defined as more than 50 percent of the building square footage in residential use
- Improvements to buildings constructed within the last five years

Eligible Interior Improvements

- Costs associated with adding or removing walls (including costs associated with insulation, footers, load bearing walls, roofing systems, and foundations)
- Interior remodel project
 - New and replacement flooring
 - New ceiling installations
 - New millwork and cabinetry, service counters
 - Interior demolition
 - Plumbing, natural gas, and electrical systems
- Interior painting (only when combined with a complete remodel)
- Cost associated with installation of a new restroom, if required for change of use

- Flood proofing for properties in a floodplain
- Cost to upsize an HVAC system due to significant business expansion resulting in building addition
- Remediation of environmental contamination on the interior of the building, including painting, such as lead, mold, or asbestos
- Architectural and engineering fees, as well as permitting and development review fees (Matching reimbursement only upon completion of improvements)

Ineligible Interior Improvements

- Work performed by an unlicensed contractor when license is required
- Improvements performed before the approval of the grant application.
- Routine or deferred maintenance
- Painting, when not associated with other improvements
- New building construction (additions to existing structures are permitted)
- Improvements to any buildings located in a residential zoning district or to any portion of the building used for residential purposes
- Improvements to buildings constructed within the last three years
- HVAC repair; replacement only for the existing building (except for replacement due to building expansion)
- Improvements that are not a fixed, installed or permanent part of the building.

Eligible Food-Service/Grocery Expenses

- Grease traps and/or interceptors
- Kitchen hoods and/or venting
- Plumbing/electrical
- Gas lines
- Installed Walk-ins (freezer/fridge)
- Prep space
- Permanent kitchen equipment (must include installation, excluding non-fixed equipment)
- Floor drains
- Three-compartment sink
- Flooring
- AC/heat
- Fire suppression
- Solid waste/recycling systems
- Restrooms
- ADA compliance
- Utility impact fees related to change of use to food service/grocery, or expansion/new construction of a food service/grocery business
- Other improvements (approved by the CRA) to facilitate a change of use
- Architectural and engineering fees, as well as permitting and development review fees (Matching reimbursement only upon completion of improvements)



Ineligible Food-Service/Grocery Expenses

- Non-fixed equipment
- Installation of equipment by an unlicensed contractor
- Work performed by an unlicensed contractor when license is required
- Improvements performed before the approval of the grant application
- Routine or deferred maintenance
- Supplies
- Exterior building improvements, except grease interceptors
- Generators
- Furnishings, window coverings/blinds
- Improvements due to damage, including damage caused by a natural disaster or act of God
- Improvements to a detached structure
- Window or door security bars
- Security cameras and systems

APPLICATION SUBMITTAL REQUIREMENTS

Applications will be considered on a rolling basis, with approvals made on a first-come, first-qualified basis until the depletion of the program's budget. Any expenses incurred before an approved application are ineligible. The application must be completed on the Neighborly application portal, available on our website: www.Pinellas.gov/Lealman For more information about application requirements and eligible activities, please contact:

Cameron Ehmig
CRA Specialist
(727) 464-5411
Cehmig@pinellas.gov

Application packages must include the following information:

- Completed and signed application form.
- Property is current on all property taxes, not in foreclosure, and has no outstanding liens or Code Enforcement violations. If the work proposed would remediate all code violations, this requirement may be waived at discretion of CRA staff.
- Documentation of property ownership or written consent from the property owner permitting the identified improvements. (The property owner will be required to sign the Grant Agreement to assume responsibility for the maintenance of improvements funded by the Grant.)
- Legal description and survey of the project site. Per Sec. 138-3502 in the Land Development Code, vacant properties must have had their surveys completed within the last year. For developed properties the survey must have been completed within the previous five years.



- CRA staff may require a Zoning Certification letter to certify the zoning/land use and allowable use and site plan if applicable.
- Use and proposed property improvements must be consistent with Pinellas County's land development regulations
- Digital photographs of existing conditions of the project site
- A written description of project improvements
- Sketches or conceptual drawings of improvements that the Grant will fund.
- *Healthcare providers* must provide their practice's license information
- Applicants in the food-service business must provide proof that they have at least three years of food-service experience. New restaurant concepts may be asked to provide a business plan, tentative menu, and/or other supporting documentation. Grocery stores that sell fresh food may also be considered.

Failure to provide the required information may delay the review and approval or result in the application being denied.

GRANT REQUIREMENTS & COMPLIANCE

Successful applicants must sign a Grant Agreement with the County Administrator 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:

- Applicants shall complete the projects referenced in the Grant Agreement in less than 24 months
- Within six-24 months of execution of the Grant Agreement, CRA staff may ask for status of projects from applicant. (Length of time will depend on the nature of work proposed.)
- Non-compliance with the above deadlines may result in revocation of the Grant Award

Absent approval of an extension of the deadlines above by the CRA staff, failure to comply will result in the cancellation of the Grant Agreement, rescission of the Grant Award, and return of the earmarked funding to the Lealman Redevelopment Trust Fund. The applicant must maintain the improvements per the terms of the Grant Agreement and Pinellas County's Code of Ordinances.

Disbursement of the Grant will not be made until all payments are made to the contractors, and all project components identified in the Grant Agreement have been completed, inspected by the Building Department, and a Certificate of Occupancy or Certificate of Use has been issued, as applicable, by Pinellas County.

PROCUREMENT METHOD

An Informal Procurement Method will be utilized. Grant recipients must obtain at least two (2) bids for the services sought and must select the most responsive and responsible vendor with the lowest price. A "responsive vendor" is able to meet the requirements of the solicitation, and a "responsible vendor" is willing and capable of furnishing the services solicited. A Waiver of Competition may be requested by the applicant and granted by Pinellas County under extenuating circumstances, including but not limited to: (1) there is only one person or firm that can provide the service (sole source justification); or (2) bids have been solicited but responsible and responsive bids have not been received. Applicants must provide documentation of bids received and if a Waiver of Competition is needed, documentation of all vendors contacted, the method of contact, their response, and the date(s) contacted.

CHANGE ORDERS

- Change orders, minor or significant that result in a change to the scope of work must be consistent with the standards



and overall project of the original contract. Any change order or change to the scope of work that results in increased in costs shall be the applicant's responsibility. .

FINAL INSPECTION

The project file should record all final documents, release of liens, proof of final payments to contractor(s), and photos. Before grant disbursement, staff will complete a final inspection to ensure that all work is complete per the Grant Agreement. The contractor or property/business owner must provide proof that all open permits are finalized, if applicable. During the final inspection, staff will take photos of the completed project. The grant payment process may take up to 45 days.

ADDITIONAL REQUIREMENTS

Pinellas County reserves the right to add any requirements needed to effectuate the goals of this program or comply with any legal requirements. Pinellas County reserves the right to amend the instructions, requirements, or general and special conditions. Further, Pinellas County may waive specific provisions of these requirements based upon determining the project's public benefit.

