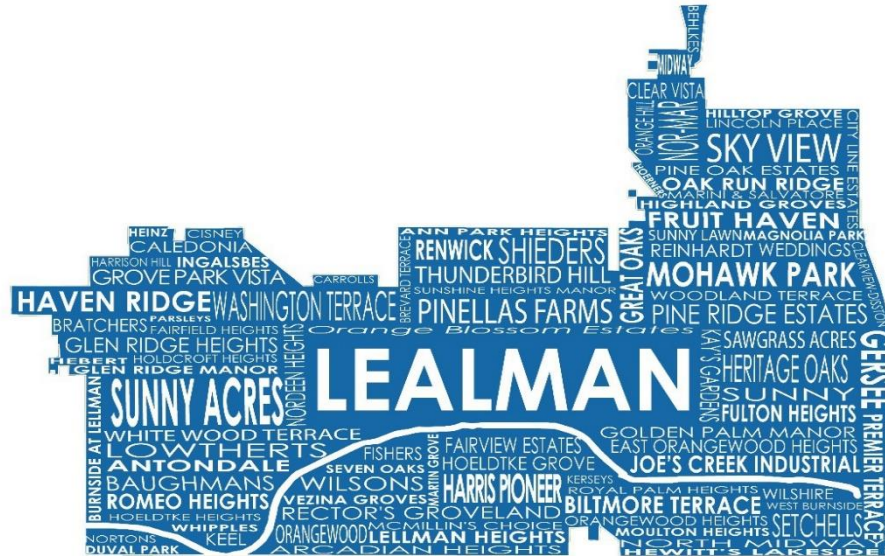




Lealman Community Redevelopment Area Residential Improvement Program Grant Guidelines Fiscal Year 2025



Applications & supporting documents may only be submitted electronically to the neighborly web portal located at the Lealman CRA website at:

<https://pinellas.gov/Residential-Improvement-Grant-Program-Application/>

Any questions regarding your application can be directed to:

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GRANT OVERVIEW

The purpose of the Residential Improvement Program is to assist income-eligible owner-occupants of single-family homes in upgrading and enhancing their property's exterior appearance, providing a positive visual impact on the neighborhood, and encouraging surrounding property owners to maintain their properties. For this program, "income-eligible" is defined as households whose income is 120% and below the area median income (AMI). The maximum income levels for this program are based on the Florida Housing Finance Corporation's SHIP Program, which is adjusted annually. (See table below to determine if you qualify.) Properties must be located within the boundaries of the Lealman CRA to be eligible for this program.

% of Median Income (Annual Income)	1 Person	2 Persons	3 Persons	4 Persons	5 Persons	6 Persons	7 Persons	8 Persons
120% of Median	\$73,080	\$83,520	\$93,960	\$104,280	\$112,680	\$121,080	\$129,360	\$137,760

GRANT FUND AMOUNTS

Applicants may receive a matching grant (depending on AMI) of up to \$15,000 for eligible improvements.

PROPERTY ELIGIBILITY

Eligible properties must be located within the Lealman CRA and include single-family detached houses, townhomes, villas, cooperatives, condominiums, and manufactured housing. Properties must be structurally sound and meet Florida and Pinellas County housing and building codes.

APPLICANT ELIGIBILITY

A property owner is eligible to apply. Applicants must be able to demonstrate their eligibility (with assistance provided by County staff):

- \$15,000 Residential improvement grants for residents at or below 120% of the AMI
 - o No match between 0% to 30% AMI
 - o 5 % match between Greater than 30% to 50% AMI
 - o 25% match between Greater than 50% to 80% AMI
 - o 50% match between Greater than 80% AMI and 120% AMI
- Applicants do not qualify for the grant program if income exceeds 120% AMI.
- Ownership of the property.
- The property is in the Lealman CRA boundaries.
- The applicant(s) must be current on all property taxes.
- The property must not have any outstanding liens.
- Property must not be in foreclosure.
- Properties are eligible for Lealman CRA Improvements grants once every three years.

To qualify for grant approval, residents' projects must improve the curb appeal of their homes. CRA staff may exercise discretion to require additional enhancements to ensure alignment with program priorities. For instance, if a resident applies for a grant for driveway installation alone, CRA staff may determine that painting and landscaping are also needed to meet program standards, approving the project only if these elements are included. Similarly, a grant request solely for painting might prompt staff to require upgrades to windows, doors, or landscaping to maximize curb appeal. Staff reserves the right to mandate multiple elements from the approved projects list as part of the requested project and may decline approval if residents do not agree to incorporate these requirements. The examples listed are not exhaustive of the scenarios and the CRA staff are unlimited in their discretion of the improvements required to qualify for the full use of the grant.

ELIGIBLE & INELIGIBLE IMPROVEMENTS

Eligible Improvements

- Exterior painting of all exterior elevations on residence and detached secondary or accessory buildings, including pressure washing (to be paired with additional projects only).
- Repairing siding, masonry, or stucco. Repairing or replacing doors and windows on principal elevation(s)¹ of residence.
- Install, replace, or repair window or door awnings and shutters (including hurricane shutters).
- Install, replace, or repair front porches and stoops.
- Construct or repair/replace accessibility ramps.
- *Driveway/sidewalk installation and repair (considered on a case-by-case basis depending on permitting requirements). - See Appendix A
- Remedying exterior code enforcement violations.
- Fencing repair or replacement or removal of front yard chain link fences (front yard only; double frontage lots shall be evaluated on a case-by-case basis; new chain link fencing is ineligible).
- Landscaping (for areas visible from the street) (no sod allowed, must be Native or "Florida-Friendly" plants and pre-approved by Pinellas County; not to exceed 10% of grant award).
- Tree trimming or removal (requires county approval, and the county may require a licensed arborist to confirm tree removal is necessary).

**Driveways require extensive review, and all driveway projects require a detailed and well-submitted project scope following Pinellas County permit guidelines. All driveway bids not meeting the scope of the project's needed requirements will be rejected until all basic requirements are met. See Appendix A for these guidelines and a full list of driveway requirements.*

Ineligible Improvements

- Work performed by an unlicensed contractor.
- Improvements completed or in the repair process before grant application approval.
- Interior repairs or renovations
- New building construction
- Improvements to residences constructed within the last five (5) years.
- Roof repairs or replacement
- Security systems (including metal roll-down gates, window bars, and cameras)
- Routine maintenance

¹A "principal" elevation is the side of a building that faces one or more public streets (not alleys).

APPLICATION PROCESS

Applications will be accepted on a rolling basis, with funding awarded on a first-come, first-qualified basis until the program's budget is depleted. Any expenses incurred before an approved application are ineligible. All applications will only be accepted electronically using the Neighborly portal. Paper applications will not be accepted. Applicants will upload the following:

- Photographs of the requested items the grant is being sought to repair. **All photos must be in color and taken from a clear distance of the entire structure. Close-up images are not accepted.**
- A copy of your Driver's License or other valid Government photo ID is also required.
- A property tax bill showing no arrears and proof of homestead. All homeowners on the deed must be listed and sign the application. Extenuating circumstances should be explained to CRA staff before applying.
- Income Certification Form for all adult household members with or without income, as well as wage documents, including paystubs, Social Security, or other retirement income. Applicants must upload a copy of their most recent tax return, copies of their last two pay stubs, or any other income documents required by the portal.

Incomplete applications, including improper photo uploads, will not be accepted until all uploads are properly completed.

Once an application is received, CRA staff will take the following steps:

1. The application will be reviewed for completeness. A due diligence review will be conducted within three (3) business days of acceptance. If an application is deemed ineligible, staff will notify the applicant, who will have ten (10) business days to provide any additional information requested to clear conditions. If the additional information requested is not provided within this period, staff will review all subsequently received funding applications. If the conditions cannot be cleared, the applicant will be advised, and the file will be archived as ineligible.
2. If the additional requested information to clear the conditions is not submitted within thirty calendar days (30), the application will automatically be deemed incomplete and considered ineligible for funding and archived.
3. After an application is complete, staff will advise the applicant that they have conditional approval, and the applicant will seek a contractor to perform the work identified on their application. The applicant has thirty (30) calendar days to contact vendors and collect two bids for the scope of work to be completed. You can work with any contractor you choose; however, all vendors selected must be licensed contractors in the State of Florida. You can verify if they are licensed by going to <https://www2.myfloridalicense.com>. Using a contractor not licensed in the state of Florida will cause the grant application to be ineligible for funding, and no exceptions can be made.
4. Upon final receipt of all bids, staff will review and accept the most responsive and responsible bid (described below in the Procurement Method section) within three (3) business days. Once a contractor is selected, the applicant will execute an Acceptance of Grant Guidelines and a Work Contract, executed by the applicant, their selected contractor(s), and the County.

5. Once all required parties fully execute the Acceptance of the Grant and Conditions and Work Contract, a Notice to Proceed will be issued, notifying the applicant that work can begin. Any work started or completed before issuance of a Notice to Proceed is ineligible for grant funding. Once a Notice to Proceed is issued, the contractor has one hundred twenty (120) calendar days to complete all work.
6. Once the work is complete, the applicant must sign a Certificate of Final Inspection indicating the work's satisfactory completion. All permits must be closed out, and before-and-after pictures of the work must be submitted before the Certificate of Final Inspection can be executed.
7. Once a Certificate of Final Inspection is executed, Pinellas County staff will process payment(s) to the contractor(s).

The Residential Improvement Program funding levels are approved annually. The County Administration will prioritize applications when demand exceeds funding based on income levels and type (salary or fixed) if the resident is disabled and/or elderly, as well as the geographic location of the application. For instance, to stimulate renovation activity or build upon existing activity, the County Administration may focus funding awards on entire neighborhoods or even specific neighborhood blocks.

PROCUREMENT METHOD

An Informal Procurement Method will be utilized. Grant recipients must obtain at least two (2) bids for the services sought, and CRA staff will select the most responsive and responsible vendor at the lowest price. A "responsive vendor" can meet the solicitation requirements, 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 in certain situations, including but not limited to (1) an emergency that risks the health and safety of the occupants or would result in considerable costs being incurred for services are not rendered without delay; (2) there is only one person or firm that can provide the service (sole source justification); or (3) 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 requested, documentation indicating all vendors contacted, the method of contact, and the date(s) contacted.

CHANGE ORDERS

Change orders will not be allowed under the terms of this grant program. Once executed, any changes to the contract's original terms will be at the contractor's and the resident's discretion. They must agree that the resident will be responsible for paying any difference to the scope of work for any change orders. Pinellas County will not approve nor accept any change orders.

FINAL INSPECTION AND PAYMENT

The project file should record all final documents, release of liens, final disposition of funds, and photos. Staff will ensure that the homeowner receives any warranty information and that a copy is placed in the file.

Before Pinellas County issues its matching payment, the contractor must close out any open permits, if applicable. CRA staff will complete a final inspection to ensure all work is complete per the contract and the Scope of work. During the final inspection, staff will take final photos of the project and request completion of a Homeowner's Inspection Form.



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, general and special conditions, or scope of work. Further, Pinellas County may waive specific provisions of these requirements based upon determining the project's public benefits.

Appendix A – Driveway Project Guidelines

Before we approve any driveway bids, contractors must take the following steps before submitting bids:

Contractors must include a scope of work for all bids submitted with clear pricing. The bids should include all expenses and project costs as part of the bid, as no change orders will be allowed, including anything related to permitting.

- Per county guidelines, contractors must obtain required permits before building a driveway. Depending on project parameters and location, up to four permits might be necessary.
- All bids must reflect the estimated costs of these permits.
- The four permits include:
 - Zoning clearance: required for new, replacement, or extended driveways.
 - Habitat/tree/environmental permit: required for new, replacement, or extended driveways.
 - Right-of-way permit: required for new, replacement, or extended driveways.
 - Utilization permit: required for private projects in the county right-of-way, such as new or replacement driveways.

All driveways in Pinellas County must meet the following design and construction criteria in the current Pinellas County Standard Details (at the time this application was published, some standard details are listed below). It is the contractors' responsibility to verify any updates to the publication before submitting their bids.

- Width: Private driveways must be at least 10 feet wide, and single duplex driveways must be at least 20 feet wide.
- The maximum width is 24 feet on collector and arterial roads and 30 feet on local subdivision roads.
- Radius: In rural sections, the minimum radius is 15 feet.
- Flares: If the road has an urban curb and gutter section, install Department of Transportation standard flares.
- Shoulder: If a driveway crosses a ditch, you must provide a stabilized shoulder at least 6 feet wide on each side of the driveway. This requires additional expenses and work that should be accounted for upfront on the bid, as changes will not be approved after.
- Culvert: If you're installing a culvert, the end of the trench can't extend past the extended property line.
- **Concrete must be at least 6" Thick, and 3000 PSI is the minimum required grade of concrete.**

*You can find the most up-to-date version of Pinellas County Standard Details at <https://pinellas.gov/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/std-details-Dec-2017-version.pdf>, including the requirements for acceptable Driveway installation. You must follow these guidelines and document them in your bid as well. Deviation from these standards will not be allowed.

*All bids submitted must be complete and correctly verified based on guidelines, as no change orders will be approved. Any change orders requested must be paid by the resident and negotiated between the contractor and the resident.

*Building Codes: All work to be done shall be subject to state and local building code regulations as interpreted by the Pinellas County Building Department. It is recommended to contact them for any guidance prior to any driveway projects.