

PASCO COUNTY COMMERCIAL REDEVELOPMENT LANDSCAPING GRANT PROGRAM FOR TARGET AREAS

Objective. Goal 1.4, Development/Redevelopment, of the Pasco County Strategic Plan provides strategies to “restore the vitality of our traditional neighborhoods and encourage reinvestment in older neighborhoods through a variety of new development and redevelopment projects”. One strategy to achieve this broad goal is to “fund incentives to promote urban design, and visual, landscaping and aesthetic property improvements for identified and targeted redevelopment areas for beautification and property enhancement in commercial districts including, but not limited to US 19 corridor, public and private art, landscaping projects, and façade improvements”. There are a variety of academic papers and studies identifying the economic and quality of life benefits to well landscaped properties. The Texas A&M, AgriLife Extension website does an excellent job summarizing some of the advantages of well landscaped commercial properties as follows. “In today’s economic climate, businesses are seeking out new methods to effectively maintain their consumer base. What few businesses realize is that the simple addition of landscaping to a store front can make all the difference to a customer. The positive environment created by aesthetically pleasing landscaping not only welcomes customers inside, but also enhances their perception of the level of quality of products and services offered by that store. Consumers are willing to pay higher prices, travel further to, and shop longer in a store that they perceive to be a quality establishment. Adding flowers or shrubs to the outside of a business can boost sales and widen the consumer base to include more customers. In addition, ornamental plants are an effective way to revitalize a stale business, bring in more clients, and improve the overall environment of the store. Furthermore, the presence of ornamental plants makes shoppers feel less stressed and more at ease in a store, which is a huge factor in increasing the total amount of time spent shopping. Landscaping is an effective way to invite more customers to a store and to keep them coming back to experience the positive environment they encounter there. (Bisco Werner 1996, Brethour 2007, Frank 2003, McPherson 2004, PNLA 2009, Wolf 1998)”. Additionally, the aforementioned website also affirms well landscaped properties boost occupancy rates in commercial buildings. “Landscape amenities represent an effective way to boost the occupancy rate of apartments and other commercial buildings. People enjoy aesthetically pleasing areas and are much more likely to choose to live and work in buildings with attractive landscapes, so there is a high correlation between nice landscaping and high occupancy rates of buildings. It therefore becomes more economically feasible to invest money in landscaping because the return in the number of tenants and amount of rent money far exceeds the cost of installing ornamental plants. Owners of buildings should seriously consider landscaping as a means to attract new tenants. (The Danter Company 1993, Frank 2003, Wolf 1998)”. Prospering businesses and high occupancy commercial buildings ultimately lead to higher property values.

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Program Guidelines

Commercial property owners/lease holders in designated redevelopment areas within the unincorporated area of Pasco County are eligible to apply for a landscaping grant in order to beautify their commercially zoned property.

Total Maximum Grant Allowance: \$50,000 (Please see schedule below)

Required Applicant Match: 20% Minimum of Grant Requested

Applicants seeking a landscaping grant are required to do the following:

1. Eligible properties are not to exceed ten (10) acres unless a proposed redevelopment and landscaping project will result in the creation and maintenance of an attractive community asset. For the purposes of this grant program, a commercially designated property is a tract of land located in a commercial zoning district pursuant to the Pasco County Zoning District Map, as may be amended from time to time.
2. Submit a completed grant application form, an executed Commercial Redevelopment Landscaping Grant Program Repayment Agreement, and a landscape plan meeting the requirements of the Pasco County Land Development Code, as may be amended from time to time, prepared by a professional landscape business including photographs of the existing conditions on the property to be landscaped.
3. The submitted landscape plan shall include a detailed tree and plant list and a price list (budget). Funding through the landscaping grant program is for tree and plant material only. Labor costs, dirt, mulch, and irrigation associated with the project are not eligible for grant funding.
4. The submittal shall also provide a landscaping maintenance plan identifying on-going maintenance activities by some entity other than Pasco County. Grant recipients are required to maintain landscaping, detailed in the approved landscaping plan, for a period of at least five (5) years in accordance with the grant recipient's landscaping maintenance plan.
5. The maximum grant amount for an individual property is \$50,000. A subsequent grant request for property already receiving a landscaping grant cannot be made until the recipient has successfully completed the five (5) year on-going maintenance plan. Subsequent landscaping grant applications will only be eligible if the subsequent

landscaping grant application landscaping plan is a component of further redevelopment of the existing property and/or building(s) beyond only landscaping. Property that already was landscaped through this grant program is not eligible for further grant funds as a standalone property improvement.

- a. Landscape plans shall comply with the current Land Development Code, as may be amended from time to time, or Alternative Standards, pursuant to Section 407.5 of the Land Development Code, acceptable to the Pasco County Planning and Development Department.
 - b. All landscaping and trees shall be planted on land owned and/or controlled by the applicant. Applicant control of property is defined as having obtained written permission from the property owner and having a controlling lease of the property for a minimum of five (5) years.
 - c. Plants and trees shall not be planted within any easement so as to interfere with the use of that easement, nor under any present or planned overhead utilities.
6. Applicants are required to undertake property improvements equal to not less than twenty (20) percent of the value of the requested landscaping grant amount (Applicant's Match). Property improvements are any external redevelopment, including but not limited to, facade improvements and painting, restriping and/or repaving of parking areas, and new business signage conforming to the Pasco County Land Development Code, as may be amended from time to time. Topsoil, mulch and irrigation for the landscaping and trees are eligible expenses which can be credited towards the Applicant's Match.
7. Landscape Grant Funding Schedule:
- a. Properties three (3) acres or less shall be eligible for a grant not to exceed \$20,000. If the existing parking lot is brought to Land Development Code standards, an additional \$10,000 may be awarded for a maximum grant not to exceed \$30,000
 - b. Properties greater than three (3) acres but no greater than ten (10) acres shall be eligible for a grant not to exceed \$40,000. If the existing parking lot is brought to Land Development Code standards, an additional \$10,000 may be awarded for a maximum grant not to exceed \$50,000.

8. Upon approval of the grant application and landscape plan, the County shall make a first payment representing fifty (50) percent of the total grant amount approved to the applicant. Prior to the County releasing the first grant payment, the applicant must present a copy of the current Pasco County Business Tax Receipt (BTR) of the landscape provider doing the work and the applicant's BTR if an existing business.
9. Further, prior to the release of any grant funds by the County, the applicant is required to enter into a Landscaping Grant Program Repayment Agreement with Pasco County providing that all trees and landscaping will be maintained in accordance with the approved five (5) year on-going maintenance plan. The grant recipient is required to maintain the landscaping in accordance with the approved landscape maintenance plan and replace any dead landscape stock installed under this program at its own expense.
10. Upon the County's verification of the completion of the installation of the approved landscaping and the Applicant's Match site improvements, the County shall release the remaining fifty (50) percent of the approved grant amount to the applicant.
11. The County shall inspect the property five (5) years after the landscaping funded through this program is installed. Failure to maintain the trees and landscaping will require that the grant recipient return 100 percent of the grant amount back to Pasco County.
12. Funding for this Program will be made available through the Tree Mitigation Fund established in Section 802.3.E. of the Pasco County Land Development Code, or some other source that may become available in the future. Funds are granted based on the capacity of the County's Budget and there is no guarantee that this grant program is funded at any given time