



Orange County Neighborhood Services Division Community Design Assistance Refund Program Guidelines and Criteria

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

In 2004, Orange County Neighborhood Services Division introduced the Community Design Assistance Program. The program was created to promote selected façade and site rehabilitation of commercial properties along targeted community corridors. The program provides free design assistance to business and commercial property owners, and funding to implement the façade improvements.

Design assistance is offered as a part of the program to assist in improving street appearance and to create a sense of unity, cohesion, and economic vitality in the targeted area.

The purpose of Orange County's Community Design Assistance Refund Program is to improve the aesthetic quality of the properties that act as the gateways to Orange County's older neighborhoods. The refund provides funding to upgrade and improve the exterior appearances of targeted commercial properties. The goal of the program is to promote an attractive environment for new investment and business activity that will benefit the surrounding neighborhood. To do this, the program assists commercial property owners and tenants in revitalizing their properties and the exterior of their building, thereby reducing blighting influences, improving the area's physical characteristics and enhancing the visual quality and attractiveness of the environment.

Eligible applicants can receive refunds of up to \$5,000 for façade improvements within the targeted community corridors. The façade improvements must be consistent with Orange County's Commercial Design Standards Guidelines. For more information on the review of the design standards, please contact Orange County Planning Urban Design Section at 407-836-5600.

The design team will review all applications for completeness and reimbursement recommendation. Refunds will be distributed upon completion of improvements. Funding will be awarded on a first-come, first-served basis. The design team must approve applications before any work begins on improvements.

CRITERIA AND ELIGIBILITY FOR PROJECT SELECTION

Business Eligibility

The business must be located in the established targeted community corridor to take advantage of the design refund program.

CURRENT TARGETED COMMUNITY CORRIDORS

<u>Target Area</u>	<u>Area Boundaries</u>
Lee Road	Edgewater Drive to I-4
OBT-Zellwood	Plymouth – Sorrento to Jones Avenue
Semoran Boulevard	Colonial Drive to East/West Expressway
Lancaster Road	Orange Blossom Trail to Orange Avenue
Oak Ridge Road	Orange Blossom Trail to Orange Avenue
Conway Road	Lake Margaret Drive to Gatlin Road
Aloma Avenue	Semoran Boulevard to Goldenrod Road
State Road 50	County Road 13 to Baxter Road
Pine Hills Road	Silver Star Road to Colonial Drive
Columbia Street	Ivey Lane to Henton Lane
Rio Grande Avenue	Columbia Street to I-4

The applicant must own (or lease) the property that will receive the façade improvements. A copy of the Property Owner Consent Form must be signed and notarized before approval of a project.

Any properties owned by the applicant may not be involved in court action with any Orange County Department. The applicant must verify that there are no code enforcement actions currently active against the building or the business or that the work undertaken in conjunction with the improvement project will incorporate mitigation of code violations.

A licensed Orange County contractor must complete all improvements that require a licensed professional. The contractor must be registered and have received an Occupational License from Orange County Government prior to any façade improvements.

Eligible Improvements *

Types of improvements that are eligible for grant refunds are:

- Signage
 - Removal of old pole sign and the design, production, and installation of new ground signs or installation of new ground signs.
- Awnings
 - Removal of old and the design, production, and installation of new awnings or installation of new awnings.
- Painting
 - With approved colors on exterior, in addition to other improvements and not to exceed \$1,000 of the refund money.
- Landscaping buffers
 - Amount not to exceed \$2,000 of the refund money.
- Fencing
 - Removal of old chain link fence and replace with new vinyl link fence.

* Improvements that are maintenance such as replacement roofing, paving, and structural upgrade are not eligible for grant reimbursement. The design team must approve all improvements and the projects must fully follow submitted site plans and drawings. All façade improvements must be completed within six (6) months from the approval date. Extensions will be granted after an extension form is submitted and approved by the program coordinator and design team.

Ineligible Improvements

Types of improvements that are ineligible for grant refunds are:

- Parking lot paving
- Interior work
- Lighting (new, repair or replacement)
- Roofing (repair or replacement)
- Permit fees
- Equipment
- Improvements made prior to grant approval
- Sweat equity payments (reimbursement for applicant's own labor and performance of renovation work or new construction)

All façade improvements must comply with the Commercial Design Standards Guidelines, building code requirements, local ordinances, permit requirements, and established design standards for the targeted community corridor. In addition, the business that is applying for the Community Design Assistance Program must be in operation.

PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS

Applicants should designate, in writing, one person who will serve as the project contact person. This can be the applicant or a designated representative. A completed application must be submitted prior to any work beginning. The applicant should provide proof of liability insurance with the application.

Vendors licensed with Orange County Government and the State of Florida must perform all work and provide proof of an Orange County Occupational License to the applicant and to the program coordinator. Applicants must submit a cost estimate clearly stating material costs for the project from their approved vendor.

Improvements must be completed within six (6) months of the project approval date or funding will no longer be available. Extensions will be granted after an extension application is submitted **thirty (30)** days before the project deadline and approved by the program coordinator and design team.

After completion of the project, fifty percent of the total approved project costs can be reimbursed. The County's portion of this reimbursement cannot exceed \$5,000. No more than \$10,000 will be awarded to any single parcel within one calendar year (January – December). Applicants applying a second time may be declined due to the availability of funds. The reimbursement cannot be used to refund expenses incurred prior to application approval.

Permission to take photographs of the eligible property and structures on the site is needed before and after improvements. The applicant can submit personal photographs of the property.

APPLICATION PROCESS

Interested applicants should contact Tiana Davis with the Neighborhood Services Division at 407-836-5606 to discuss their proposed project and to request an application. An application may also be downloaded from the Neighborhood Services website at www.orangecountyfl.net/neighborhoods, however, it is important to contact the program coordinator prior to completing an application.

Applicants are encouraged to contact Orange County's Planning Division - Urban Design Section staff. They are available to preview design concepts and ensure project proposals meet the Commercial Design Standards Guidelines. To arrange an appointment contact the Urban Design Section of the Planning Division at 407-836-5600.

An application must be completed and submitted with all of the appropriate supplemental information for the design team to review. If a business owner/tenant is applying for the funding, the application must be signed by all legal property owners and notarized. A signed application confirms that the property is not involved in court action with any Orange County Department, does not have any outstanding code violations against the building or the business, or that any such violations have been corrected prior to any proposed improvements.

All completed applications with attachments may be submitted by hand or regular mail to:

Attention: Tiana Davis
Orange County Neighborhood Services Division
Community Design Assistance Refund Program
450 East South Street, Suite 332
Post Office Box 1393
Orlando, Florida 32802-1393

Electronic submission of the application with attachments may be sent to Tiana Davis at tiana.davis@ocfl.net. Please put "Community Design Assistance Program" in the subject area.

Completed applications will be reviewed and funding will be awarded in the order in which they are received. All applicants will be notified in writing within thirty (30) days of their submission whether an application has been approved or denied.

No improvements should be made prior to the issuance of the grant approval in writing. Any changes made to the project that have not been approved will not be eligible for funding and may disqualify the entire project for reimbursement.

After the applicant receives the approval letter, work with the contractor can begin. The applicant should set up a work schedule with the contractor and make sure the project will be completed within six (6) months. The applicant and contractor must make sure the appropriate permits required by Orange County have been applied for prior to any work being done.

Upon completion of the façade improvements, the applicant is responsible for paying the contractor. The applicant will notify the program coordinator of completion and provide an invoice to the Community Design Assistance Refund Program Coordinator as well as proof of payment (i.e. paid receipts, invoices, and cancelled check payments).

The design team reviews completed improvements, takes photographs of the property and if the team declares it's complete and satisfactory, the reimbursement process begins. The reimbursement process may take up to forty-five (45) days. Once the reimbursement check is issued, the project is complete and the applicant will receive a certificate of completion.

By accepting grant funds, the Applicant commits to properly maintaining all improvements to keep the property free from debris, graffiti, and upkeep of landscaping for a minimum of three (3) years at the applicant's own cost and expense. Any damage to the property is to be repaired immediately by the applicant so that the area remains in good condition and positively contributes to the targeted community corridor and neighborhood. On an ongoing basis, the applicant should begin to touch up painted areas and perform any other repairs needed to maintain the property's appearance.

If you have any questions or would like more information about this program, please contact Tiana Davis at:

Orange County Neighborhood Services Division
450 East South Street, Suite 332
Orlando, Florida 32802

Phone: (407) 836-5606
Email: tiana.davis@ocfl.net