

City of Leesburg Lake Front City

Agenda Memorandum

Item No: 6.C.3.

Meeting Date: September 22, 2025

From: Al Minner, (City Manager)

Subject: An Ordinance of the City of Leesburg, Florida, amending Section 7-170 of the City of Leesburg Code of Ordinances, amending the existing Facade, Sign and Landscape Grant Program, expressing purpose, eligible locations; creating an application process and criteria; setting forth requirements and conditions; implementing procedures; repealing conflicting ordinances; providing a savings clause; and providing for an effective date.

Staff Recommendation:

Approve first reading and set second final reading of ordinance.

Analysis:

At the request of Mayor Reisman, the attached ordinance modifies the existing Facade, Signage and Landscape (FSL Grant) Grant program. The modification increases maximum funding from an 80/20 max funding of \$20,000 to a 90/10 max funding of \$50,000 grant program. The purpose if the modification is to increase participation in the program. At this time, there is an assumption that signage costs have increased beyond the amount that makes the City's program attractive. In addition, with a significant number of non-conforming signs on major City corridors, the aim is to increase funding to get non-conforming signs replaced with newer, monument-style signage.

Procurement Analysis:

N/A

Options:

1. Approve as presented; or
2. Such alternative action as the Commission may deem appropriate.

Fiscal Impact:

The FSL program is funded at the discretion of the City Commission. The FY 26 Budget contemplates a \$500,000 FSL allocation in the 441/27 CRA and funds are available in the Carver Heights, Downtown and General Fund, should the Commission chose to make such allocations.

ORDINANCE NO. _____

AN ORDINANCE OF THE CITY OF LEESBURG, FLORIDA, AMENDING SECTION 7-170 OF THE CITY OF LEESBURG CODE OF ORDINANCES, AMENDING THE EXISTING FAÇADE, SIGN AND LANDSCAPE GRANT PROGRAM, EXPRESSING PURPOSE, ELIGIBLE LOCATIONS; CREATING AN APPLICATION PROCESS AND CRITERIA; SETTING FORTH REQUIREMENTS AND CONDITIONS; IMPLEMENTING PROCEDURES; REPEALING CONFLICTING ORDINANCES; PROVIDING A SAVINGS CLAUSE; AND PROVIDING FOR AN EFFECTIVE DATE.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE PEOPLE OF THE CITY OF LEESBURG, FLORIDA:

SECTION 1.

Section 7-170 of the Code of Ordinances of the City of Leesburg, Florida, is hereby modified and readopted as set forth below:

A. PURPOSE, COMPLIANCE AND DISCRETION

1. The City of Leesburg's Façade, Signage and Landscaping Improvement Grant Program (FSL Grant) is a program designed to encourage private investment in visible exterior property, building and sign improvements that enhance the value of commercial/residential property; while meeting the intent and mission of the City to improve the aesthetics and ambiance of specific major corridors. The program may provide as much as **\$50,000**. Funds appropriated annually by the City Commission and funding shall be available on a first come first serve basis. However, the program may be subject to the availability of funds, as determined by the City Commission.
2. FSL Grants must support the goals of the City Commission and be in compliance with corresponding building signage, architectural standards and other City regulations.
3. Applicants are reminded that grant awards made are discretionary in nature and should not be considered an entitlement by the applicant. All grant criteria contained herein are guidelines for awards and successful applicants may receive any amount up to the maximum award. Should an application meet all grant criteria, a grant may or may not be awarded at the City Commission's discretion due to a number of circumstances such as funding limitations, competing applications, and/or competing priorities.

B. ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

1. The FSL Grant Program is available to businesses and/or building owners that are located with the target districts, as specified in Exhibit "A". These districts include areas within the City's CRA boundaries that have frontage on roadways to include U.S.27, U.S. 441, Main

Street, plus all properties fronting Dixie Avenue and South Street. Businesses applying for the FSL Grant must be properly licensed and applicants must be a permitted/conforming use within the district.

2. Applications will not be accepted from property owners (and tenants of the property owners) who are delinquent on their property taxes. Applicants must not have any outstanding code liens or code violations that cannot be remedied with this grant assistance.

C. ELIGIBLE IMPROVEMENTS

1. The FSL Grant Program shall provide matching funds for exterior (street side) improvements that are consistent with and further the implementation of the Land Development Code, respective CRA Redevelopment Plans and the City Comprehensive Plan. Funds may be used for the following improvements:
 - a. Replacement of windows and doors;
 - b. Exterior painting or siding as part of an overall façade renovation program. For example, painting is an eligible expense when done in conjunction with other major exterior improvements such as roofline changes, dormers, gable.
 - c. New signs as part of an overall improvement program for an existing improved property and removal of existing non-conforming and blighted signs;
 - d. Landscaping when associated with a Façade Renovation Program, replacement of a non-conforming sign, or an overall improvement program for an existing improved property;
 - e. Exterior architectural amenities (e.g., addition or improvement of balconies, porches or arcades);
 - f. Awnings and shutters, other exterior (street-side) façade improvements (considered by the Commission on a case-by-case basis);
 - g. Architectural, engineering or landscape architectural services to design improvements may be funded through this program (maximum of 10% of total grant award).

****NOTE: This list is illustrative.***

All architectural designs, materials and colors must be consistent with the historic and architectural heritage of the City of Leesburg Code of Ordinances adopted under Ordinance 16-35 Architectural Design Standards and Ordinance 03-112 Historic District Ordinance and Guidelines.

D. NON-ELIGIBLE IMPROVEMENTS

1. The FSL Grant Program cannot be used to fund **miscellaneous maintenance items not provided in Section C**, interior renovations or roof repair. **The FSL grant can be used to fully replace, non-conforming signs.**

Any improvements constructed or installed prior to City Council approval are not eligible.

E. AVAILABLE FUNDING AND MATCHING REQUIREMENT

1. The City shall fund this program from various sources to include, the Downtown Leesburg CRA; 441/27 CRA; Carver Heights CRA; and the General Fund. It is anticipated that 3-5

projects per year will receive funding; however, if additional funding is available, more funding cycles may be considered.

2. All façade, signage and landscaping grants shall be funded **90% by the City and 10% by the applicant. The City's portion shall not exceed \$50,000.**

F. APPLICATION PROCESS AND DEADLINE

1. Applications will be accepted on a first come, first served basis.
2. **It is the intent of the City Commission to conduct one** ~~As long as the FSL Grant Program annually, is funded, there will be an annual grant cycle~~ commencing on October 1 each year. All applications for funding shall be due on November 15 or the next immediate workday if the day is a holiday or weekend.
3. Application deadlines may change if funding levels permit additional grant cycles. In that case, **and there will be no deadline for application, provided that the application is processed pursuant to section F.4 of this policy.** ~~the City will announce an additional cycle with an opening and closing application deadline.~~
4. The following application process shall be used for all grant applications submitted under this section:
 - a. The applicant receives an FSL Grant Program Application. Application forms are available in the following locations:
 - i. City Hall – 501 West Meadow Street;
 - ii. Planning and Zoning Department - 204 South Fifth Street;
 - iii. The Leesburg Area Chamber of Commerce- 1195 W Magnolia St.; and
 - iv. The City of Leesburg website: www.leesburgflorida.gov.
 - b. The applicant completes the application and submits it to the City for review and consistency with the CRA Redevelopment Plan, the Land Development Code, the **City Comprehensive Plan** and any other applicable plans. The application package includes the following:
 - i. Completed application;
 - ii. Proof of ownership of the property;
 - iii. Proof of paid property taxes (current and prior years);
 - iv. Copy of an estimate for the work to be completed;
 - v. Photos of area to be improved;
 - vi. Other information as needed to ensure all proposed work will be performed to meet the guidelines herein.
 - c. The applicant is responsible for all building and other permits and fees associated with the proposed project.
 - d. Applicants are advised to submit a complete application and all supporting materials pursuant to the instructions in the packet. Incomplete applications may not be reviewed.

- e. The FSL Committee shall review the applications according to the program selection criteria and shall score the grant application based upon the FSL grant criteria established herein. The FSL Committee shall forward a recommendation to the City Commission for final grant consideration. The Commission shall approve, approve with modifications, or deny the funding application.
- f. The FSL Committee shall consist of three (3) individuals, to include the City Manager or Deputy City Manager, the Planning and Zoning Director and the Housing Director.
- g. FSL grant applications will not be considered if the single building/property under the same ownership has received maximum grant funds ~~(\$15,000)~~ **(\$50,000)** within two previous fiscal years. Additionally, points will be awarded to first time applicants and/or applicants that have not previously received a grant in the past two years.
- h. The following FSL Grant selection criteria may be used to review and rate applications for final funding. Criteria is derived from the goals and objectives of the City's adopted Redevelopment Plan(s), as well as the City's adopted Comprehensive Plan. Criteria are weighted with a maximum score of 100 points, as follows:
 - i. Streetscape Aesthetics and Functionality and Quality of Design (Up to 30 Points) – Degree to which the proposed project enhances the streetscapes of Leesburg, including the addition or enhancement of display windows, awnings, landscaping, handicapped accessibility and architectural amenities such as arcades, balconies and porches. Points are awarded for achieving the goals of the Redevelopment District, the Comprehensive Plan and remedying non-conformities.
 - ii. Conformity to City Regulations and Redevelopment Goals (Up to 25 Points) – Degree to which the proposed project promotes the character of Leesburg and promotes redevelopment goals through the use of urban design principles, site design, architecture, materials, color, landscaping and other visual elements.
 - iii. Removal of Slum and Blight and Positive Impact to Neighborhood (Up to 25 Points) – Degree to which the proposed project upgrades or eliminates substandard structures, code violations and/or eliminates non-conforming uses, as well as achieving the redevelopment goals of the City of Leesburg.
 - iv. Historic Preservation and Materials (Up to 15 Points) – Degree to which the proposed project promotes the historic character of Leesburg, through historic preservation, adaptive re-use of historic structures, site design, architecture, materials, landscaping and other visual and physical amenities.
 - v. Previous Grant Assistance (Up to 5 Points) – Applicants who have not been awarded the grant in the previous two years are eligible for five (5) points.

G. GRANT AWARD BY THE CITY COMMISSION OR CRA COMMISSION

1. The FSL Committee will review the applications according to the program selection criteria and shall score the grant application based upon the FSL grant criteria established herein. The FSL Committee shall forward a recommendation to the City Commission of respective Community Redevelopment Agency (CRA) Board for final grant consideration. The Commission or CRA Board shall approve, approve with modifications or deny the funding

application at a regular meeting of the City Commission or respective CRA meeting.

2. The FSL Committee consists of three (3) individuals, including the City Manager or Deputy City Manager, the Planning and Zoning Manager, and the Housing Director.
3. The City Commission or CRA Board shall have sole authority to award FSL grants. If a grant application is denied, the applicant may reapply during the next funding cycle. The Commission's or CRA Board's decision shall be final.

H. FSL GRANT FINAL FUNDING TO APPROVED GRANT RECIPIENTS

1. For approved grant projects, prior to construction of improvements, the applicant must submit and receive applicable building and other regulatory permits.
2. Approved Applicants will receive grant funds after the project is completed and all associated costs have been paid. Upon completion of approved work, in order to receive grant payment, the applicant must submit documentation of work completed and proof of payment. It is the responsibility of the award recipient to maintain proper documentation of funds expended in the course of completing the improvement project. Release of funds is subject to submission, review and approval of this documentation. All improvements must be completed essentially as presented to the City Commission or CRA Board in order to receive payment.
3. If the project is not completed, has not commenced, is not approved at its final inspection, or does not receive its final inspection within one (1) year of award, the grant award shall expire and the applicant shall not receive pledged funds. The applicant may request a six-month extension. Only the Commission or CRA Board, may grant extensions.
4. Upon completion of the improvements and approval by the City and final inspection, the applicant must submit a "reimbursement package" to the City which shall include the following:
 - a. Completed reimbursement form (provided by the City);
 - b. Copies of applicable invoices or receipts;
 - c. Proof of payment for improvements; and,
 - d. Before/After photos of the improvements.

I. MISCELLANEOUS INFORMATION

1. The City of Leesburg is required to file informational returns (Form 1099-G) for individuals and entities receiving grants from the City. This information is confidential and will only be used for informational return reporting purposes. Grant recipients must sign and return a W9 form to the City before funds can be distributed.

PASSED AND ADOPTED by the City Commission of the City of Leesburg, Florida, at a regular meeting held _____ day of _____ 2025.

THE CITY OF LEESBURG, FLORIDA

Alan Reisman, Mayor

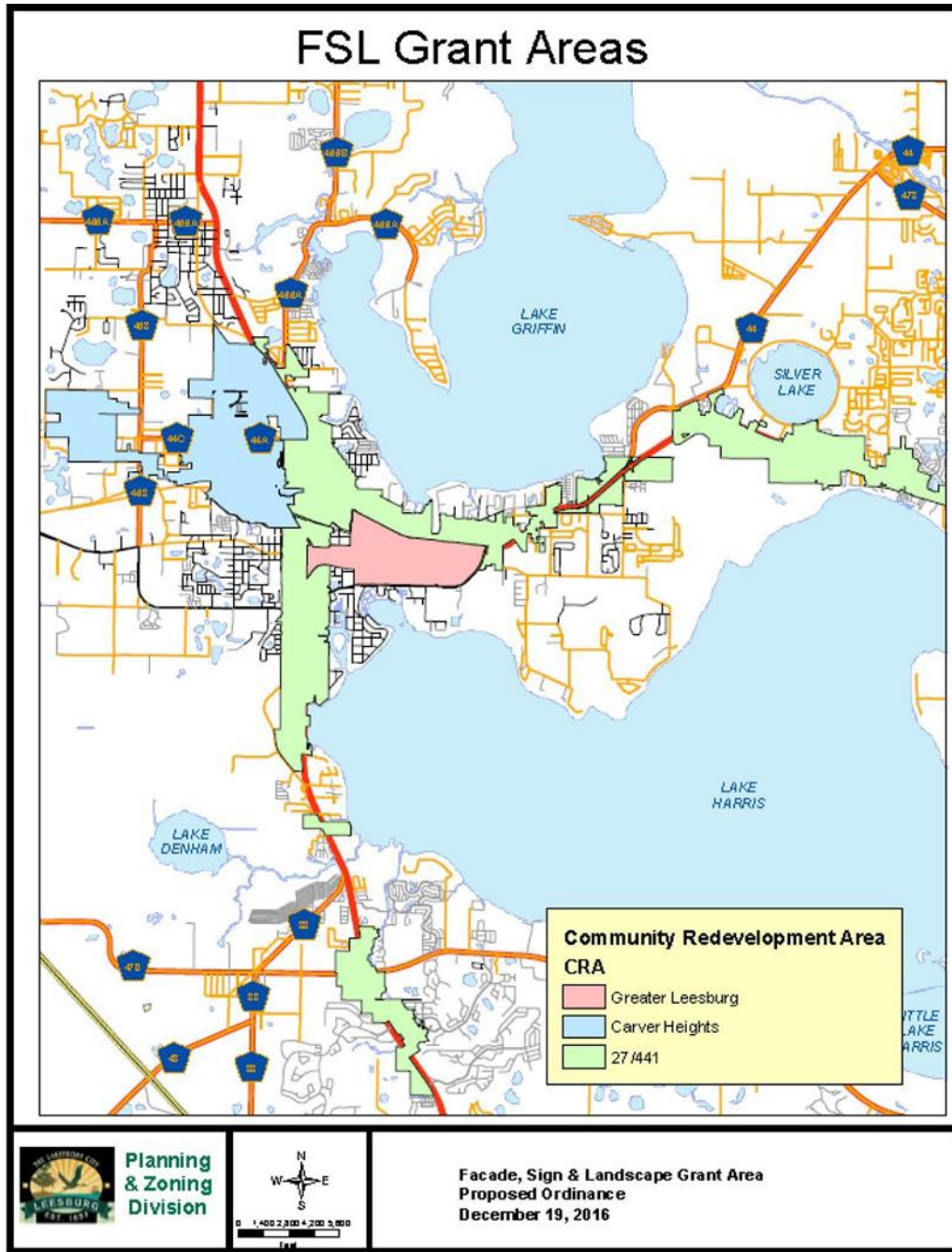
ATTEST:

City Clerk

DISCLAIMER NOTE:

Neither the City of Leesburg, nor its affiliates, shall be responsible for planning, design, or construction of improvements to property owned by the applicant. No warranties or guarantees expressed or implied by the description of, application for, or participation in the Façade, Signage and Landscaping Improvement Grant Program. The applicant is advised to consult with licensed architects, engineers, or building contractors before proceeding with final plans for construction.

MAP OF CRA BOUNDARY



FSL GRANT APPLICATION

FAÇADE IMPROVEMENT GRANT PROGRAM

1. Project Location:

Address of Property to be improved:

Assessor Parcel Number(s): _____

Name of Business(es) in Project _____

Building Frontage Measurement of Project: _____

2. *Applicant Information:*

Name: _____

Mailing Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Phone: _____

Email: _____

Do you Own, Rent or Lease the subject property? _____

****If you are not the owner, the owner will need to co-sign this application.****

3. **Businesses or Services Offered on Site:**

4. **Description of Proposed Improvements:**

5. **Please identify ways in which this project supports the Overlay District Concepts**

6. **Submittals** - Applications **must** include the following materials, if applicable, for consideration by the City:

- Photos of the Project
- Business Description
- Sign and/or Awning Renderings
- Color Samples
- Architectural Concepts – If Applicable

7. Estimated Costs and Timing: Please provide copies of three vendor bids/estimates or other documentation of cost estimates for all project work.

- a. Window or Door Replacement:_____
- b. Exterior paint or siding:_____
- c. Signage:_____
- d. Exterior Lighting:_____
- e. Façade/Exterior Architectural Improvements:_____
- f. Architectural/Design Fees:_____
- g. Landscape/Hardscape Improvements:_____
- h. Awnings or Shutters:_____
- i. Building Permit/Planning Fees:_____
- j. Other Proposed Improvements (specify):_____
- k. _____
- l. _____
- m. _____

TOTAL ESTIMATED COST: _____

ESTIMATED COMPLETION DATE:_____

SIGNATURES

Signed:_____

Applicant and/or Property Owner

Date:_____

Printed Name:_____

Property Owner – If Required:_____

Date:_____

Printed Name:_____

This Section for City Use

Amount Recommended: \$_____

Recommendation to Commission/CRA:_____

Date Reviewed:

Action: