

PSJRA Commercial Façade Grant Program

We are delighted at the number of businesses who are asking for more information about the façade grant program. While we are putting the finishing touches on the application and the process, we are able to share with you a few details to help you begin plans for your exterior improvements. Remember, our goal is to make the applications available soon after the regular January 10 board meeting of the PSJRA.

We know we have outstanding local businesses and products, and we need to convey this—just by the way we look—to anyone and everyone who drives by! The purpose of the grant program is to help businesses improve their appearance in order to attract new customers from among not only our locals but also our visitors and vacationers. The visual appearance of the Port St. Joe businesses in our historic downtown area plays an important role in portraying a positive image and promoting commerce for the community. This program provides an incentive through financial assistance to improve the exterior of existing buildings to meet commercial codes, bring the business closer in line to the PSJRA design guidelines, and improve the business climate.

Property owners (or tenants who have the written authorization of the owners) who are within the redevelopment area will be eligible for reimbursement up to \$5000 (or 50% of the total cost) for professional, contracted labor and materials for completed exterior improvements. Tax-exempt business may request design advice, but the improvements will not be funded by the PSJRA. The grant will be applicable to both occupied and unoccupied buildings, and corner buildings or extra-wide facades may be eligible for increased grant awards.

Qualifying businesses will first complete the application and then meet with the Design Review Committee. During this initial meeting, their design concepts will be briefly discussed. Applicants will be provided with the approved colors, color combinations, materials, and specific specifications to be followed (e.g. lighting, awning design and color, landscaping, and signage material, size and composition). Prior to beginning the work, applicants will meet a final time with the committee to approve the final scope of the work and the specifications. The committee will also require a schedule, with milestones, to monitor the progress. Any and all permits and inspections will be the responsibility of the applicant and will be required prior to any reimbursement.

The grants will be awarded on a first-come, first-serve basis until the \$150,000 allotted by the PSJRA has been fully committed. Reimbursable improvements will include removal of false material that may cover the original building material; pressure cleaning; repair of stucco, patching, priming and painting; new windows, doors or replacements; new or replacement woodwork details or approved architectural elements; signs and awnings (including removal and new design, production and installation); enhanced landscaping; and exterior lighting. The following will not be considered reimbursable: professional fees, salaries, taxes, marketing, debt service or permit fees. The applicants will have a six-month time frame in which to complete the approved work. Upon completion of the work, the applicant will provide the PSJRA with itemized, original receipts, copies of all applicable permits and inspections, photographs of the completed project, and sign-off by the PSJRA Design Review Committee pursuant to inspection and acceptance of the work. When all requirements have been satisfied, the PSJRA will issue the reimbursement check for up to \$5000.

Should you wish to monitor the process, please feel free to attend the PSJRA Board of Directors' meeting on Thursday, December 13 or Thursday, January 10 at 5 PM at the City Commission Chambers. Thanks!