



City of Bartow

Community Redevelopment Agency

Funding Policy

Overview

The Bartow Community Redevelopment Agency (CRA) is a government agency created by the City of Bartow in 1990 to rehabilitate and redevelop the community. Its mission is to eliminate blight and promote the redevelopment of the property within the CRA district. It achieves these goals through public-private partnerships and improvement of the public infrastructure.

The CRA is not a taxing agency. It does not create or levy taxes. The agency is a dependent special district and functions as an administrative agency. The agency does not issue permits or impose regulatory controls, and does not have the power of eminent domain. Public-private partnerships are critical for the success of the agency's efforts.

Mission

The mission of the Bartow CRA is to fund projects, programs and activities that:

- improve the public infrastructure
- stimulate economic growth by helping to stabilize and expand current businesses and by attracting new businesses that add value to Bartow businesses
- market and promote Bartow to residents and businesses, and to the outside world
- provide tools and resources to assist community organizations to become financially self sufficient and sustainable
- develop and redevelop Bartow Downtown: Historic Core - Main Street
- develop and redevelop CRA neighborhoods, upgrade housing stock and affordable housing
- develop and redevelop major highway corridors and expanded Central Business District

- add value to Bartow businesses through economic development activities and support
- develop and redevelop Central Business District area (North, West and East)

Policy Needs & Objectives

This CRA funding policy provides funding to address the overall needs and objectives of the Agency as defined in the CRA Plan. These overall needs are area-wide in scope and encompass some of the serious problems that contribute to the overall state of decline.

The CRA cannot possibly fund the immense task of redevelopment on its own and must therefore structure a policy to act as catalysts for redevelopment efforts by individual residents and businesses within the CRA and to leverage investment by private enterprise. With limited resources available for redevelopment efforts, the Agency must allocate funding to projects and programs that will provide the most benefit for the dollars expended. To assure the CRA is receiving the intended results from its projects and programs it is important that funding decisions are based on expectations of specific, measurable outcomes. Also, since the implementation of a few strategically placed well-funded programs may have a much greater impact on the overall area than many inadequately funded ones, programs and/or projects must be evaluated in the context of the Agency's overall goals, and implemented accordingly.

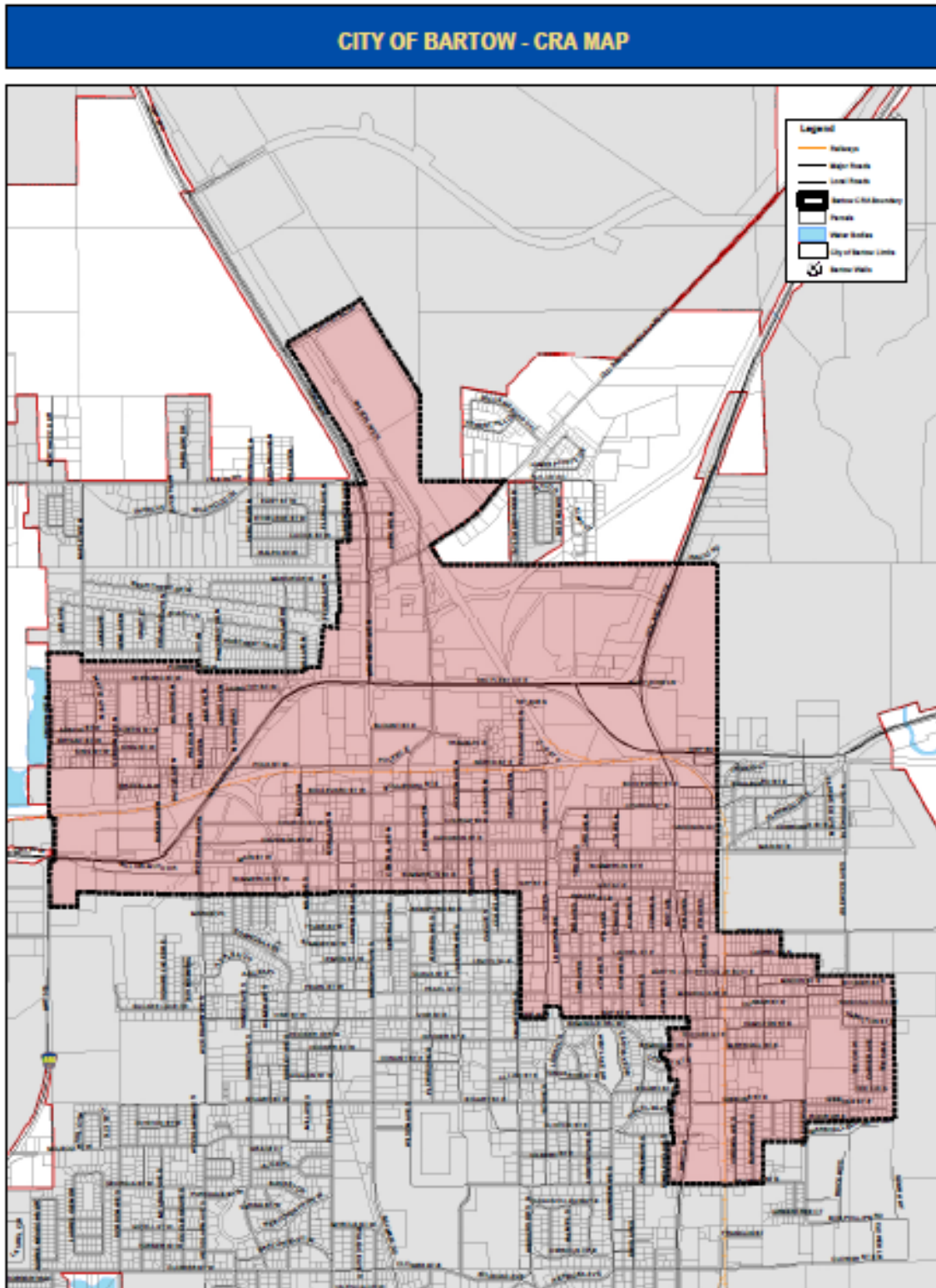
Intent

The goal of CRA funding is to improve the vitality of the community by encouraging redevelopment and eliminating blight. CRA funded projects or proposals must support this mission by furthering any of the following goals:

- Encourage redevelopment of existing properties.
- Improve the infrastructure.
- Up-grade the housing stock.
- Attract and support business.

Any request for funding must clearly explain how the funding will support one or more of these goals. Funding proposals that do not directly support one or more of the goals, no matter how worthy, will not receive funding. The stronger direct link between the proposed funding and the furthering of these goals, the more likely funding will be awarded. The decision as to whether an activity or event supports CRA goals and the priority the funding request should receive is solely the responsibility of the CRA Board.

Community Redevelopment Area Boundary



Bartow CRA
(863) 534-0121
February 2015

Types of Assistance

The CRA Board has created general funding assistance categories. The availability of a category during any fiscal year will be determined by the CRA Board.

1. Commercial Façade/Landscape Improvement Grants

Eligible expenditures for reimbursement may include awnings, exterior paint, general landscaping, doors, or other exterior improvements. Applicants must explain how landscaping and related improvements will be maintained. The CRA will match, through a grant up to 50% of the value of the approved project. At the CRA's discretion, grants may be awarded up to a \$30,000 limit. Reimbursement will be made for actual expenses, up to the amount of the grant, upon submittal of valid receipts.

2. Tax Increment Financing (TIF) Rebate

Individual or business entities that own real property with plans to renovate; construct or expand a new or existing business may apply, for a rebate of ad-valorem property taxes based on the increase value of the property. The rebate may be for up to five (5) years with an approved project receive payment at the beginning of the next full tax year after the business opening or project completion. The scheduled reimbursement for year one - is 90%; year two - 80%; year three - 70%; year four - 60%; year five - 50%. To secure reimbursement a copy of the paid tax receipt for the current years taxes shall be submitted to the CRA office. Yearly payments shall be made only after the Bartow CRA receives its yearly tax increment from all taxing agencies.

3. CRA Zero Interest Loan Program

The purpose of the Zero Interest Loan Program is to encourage individual property owners to upgrade their property by improving the external appearances of their homes and businesses and to encourage businesses to invest in their operations. The goal is to stop deterioration, stabilize or increase property values, improve and upgrade the appearances of the area, and facilitate redevelopment activity in neighborhoods.

For an approved project, the CRA may provide a grant up to five (5) percent of the total cost of the project and/or one hundred (100) percent of the interest on the loan for a five year period. The payment of interest due shall be made directly to

the owner's third party lender for a period of five (5) years. Yearly interest payments shall be made only after the Bartow CRA receives its yearly tax increment from all taxing agencies. The payment of interest shall only be made during the time that the property is owned by the applicant.

Grant dollars may be used to pay building permits. The Maximum grant amount:

- Business Loan: \$30,000
- Commercial Building: \$30,000
- Residential, Single Family: \$12,000
- Residential, Two Units: \$16,000
- Residential, Three or more Units: \$5,000 per unit up to \$30,000

Such loans are available based on the CRA Board deciding that the development will have a positive impact on growth and development within the District. The decision to approve any loans and whether loans will be secured or unsecured is made at the sole discretion of the participating banks.

4. **Special Projects**

Special projects are those that the Board determines will have a substantial impact on development/redevelopment may be eligible for funding support involving road improvement, water and sewer assistance, land consolidation, and other such activities. The eligibility of a project and types of funding received will be made by the CRA Board.

5. **Residential Demolition/Rehabilitation Program**

The purpose of the Residential Demolition/Rehabilitation Program is to eliminate or avoid the appearance of blight within the CRA district. A ten (10) year, zero interest forgivable loan for exterior rehabilitation is available to owners that meet the income criteria. For a loan to be forgiven, the property must remain in residential use and have no building code violations for the ten (10) year term of the loan.

For properties deteriorated beyond reasonable rehabilitation, owners may apply to the City of Bartow for demolition of the structure. In cases of financial hardship, owners may apply to the Building Department for rehabilitation activities that maintain or avoid further deteriorating of the structure.

- Property owner's income must be at 50% of the poverty level or less.
- Spending per residence is limited to a cap of \$10,000.

- Property owners can apply for assistance only one time in a ten-year period.
- Property owners should be encouraged to share in the costs of the rehabilitation in some amount. If an owner cannot assist in any way, a lien may be placed on the property that would possibly allow the CRA to recoup its remaining loan amount if the property were sold.

Application Procedures & Guidelines

Businesses, organizations, and individuals interested in applying for funding should submit an application packet to the CRA Director. No request will be placed on the CRA Board Agenda until the Director determines the application to be complete. The deadline for including a specific request in the next fiscal year's budget is **May 1st**. Requests submitted after that date may not be included specifically in the next fiscal year's budget but may still be considered by the Board subject to funds availability.

For a request to be considered by the Board, an application fee must be attached to the funding packet.

Statement of Interest:

- Name of business and property owner.
- Location of the proposed site or in the case of a community organization, the authorized agent and the address.
- The amount of financial assistance requested.
- The type of expenditure that would be made if the expenditure is approved.
- A detailed explanation of how the expenditures will further CRA goals and redevelopment plan. This step will determine whether funding is considered and the priority level.

Businesses:

- Amount of financial investment by the business at the new location or in an expansion of the business.
- An existing business shall include a profit and loss statement.
- A new business shall include a three year business plan.
- All applicants must include information necessary to conduct and FDLE background check and/or credit check.

Residential Owners:

- Applicants will use the forms provided by the City of Bartow Building Department.

NOTE: Any individual or business requesting funds from the CRA **must** complete a funding packet application. Submitting a funding packet application to the CRA does **not** guarantee the applicant any funding. The CRA Board determines which projects are approved and will receive funding from the Bartow CRA.

Reporting

With the exception of residential owners assisted by the City Building Department, all individuals, businesses, and community organizations shall provide a year-end expenditure report to the CRA Board within 45 days of the close of the fiscal year.

The Report Shall:

- Detail the expenditures made with CRA funding at a level that allows the Board to understand fully how the funds were used.
- Explain whether investment/matching dollars identified in the "Statement of Interest" were expended.
- Detail the success of the funding in moving forward the goals identified in the "Statement of Interest."

Eligible Expenses

(All professional work must be performed by a licensed contractor in good standing with the City of Bartow).

- Exterior Renovations/New Construction: Including, but not limited to: painting, cleaning, repairs, replacing architectural details, removing incompatible additions, repairing or replacing windows, doors, shutters, storefronts, etc., on the front, side and rear of buildings facing public entrance areas, paving/repaving or installation of brick pavers for walkways.
- Roof Coverings: Any work directly related to the replacing of the roof (e.g. shingles, decking, fascia boards, etc.). Temporary repairs or patches are not permitted with funds.
- Demolition: Including removal of structures that are deemed unfit and unsafe for use and for which new construction plans have been developed that shall benefit the CRA.

- Signage: Including removal of old signs and obsolete sign poles, brackets or fixtures; and the design, production and installation of new signage compatible with established guidelines.
- Electrical: Any work directly related to exterior window lighting, security lighting or illumination of signage.
- Landscaping: Including, but not limited to: removal of plant materials, installation of protective fencing during construction activity, replacement and addition of plant materials, soil augmentation and installation of plants, irrigation systems and window boxes.
- Awnings: Including removal of old awnings and purchase and installation of new appropriate awnings.
- Screening: Including all screening of trash receptacles, air conditioning, utility equipment or other unsightly objects or areas with landscape material or with fencing material that compliments the building material.
- Parking Areas: The creation or improvement of off-street, private parking facilities that provide a safe and pleasant parking environment for customers and employees.
- Design Assistance: Professional design services related to structural renovation, new construction, signage and landscaping. Design costs cannot exceed 10% of total grant funding reimbursement request.
- Permit/Impact Fees: Including any permitting fees that are required by City Code.

Ineligible Expenses

- Any proposed improvements to government owned properties, to tenants in government owned properties, or to non-profit organization
- Improvements made prior to grant approval
- Improvements to properties containing sexually-oriented business
- Improvements undertaken to rid the property of major code violations
- Improvements to properties that do not or cannot meet building and safety codes
- Improvements to properties with unpaid property taxes (City and County)
- Interior renovations
- Refinancing existing debts
- Non-fixed improvements

- General periodic maintenance
- Inventory/fixtures/equipment
- Materials in excess of what is deemed necessary by the CRA to complete the project
- Sweat equity payments (i.e., Applicant's own labor and performance of renovation work will **not** be reimbursable but may be eligible for use as match funding)
- Work performance that is **not** consistent with the Design Guidelines for the CRA district as adopted by the Community Redevelopment Agency

Eligibility

- Must property located within the CRA boundaries
- Must employ a minimum of two (2) employees
- A new business that has been in business for less than six (6) months or re-locating to town
- An existing business must be in operation for a minimum of three (3) years

Ineligible Businesses

- Religious Affiliated stores
- Churches
- Non-Profits
- Financial Services

Quality of Work

All work must be performed in a professional and workman-like manner. Prior to the work commencing, the applicant must secure all necessary federal, state and local permits. Upon completion, all work must pass applicable federal, state and local inspections. The CRA reserves the right to withhold reimbursement should the final inspection reveal that the work performed was not completed in a professional, workman-like manner and per the approved application and permit(s).

Projects involving the improvement of real property shall be required to obtain all applicable jurisdictional agency permits and approvals, comply with applicable codes and regulations and use properly licensed contractors as required by the City's Building Official.

Nondiscrimination

The funding policy shall be available to anyone meeting the eligibility requirements and no one shall be denied the benefits of said policy because of race, color, national origin or sex.

Relocation

It is not the intent of the Bartow CRA to engage in any rehabilitation activity that requires vacating property.

Conflicts of Interest

Any and all conflicts of interest must be declared upon submission of an application.