

Firestone could be 1st to get aid to improve appearance

By Debbie Carson
Staff Writer

TEMPLE TERRACE — Leaders at the Firestone Tire in Temple Terrace could find out June 3 whether or not their application for nearly \$3,800 will be approved for a new business appearance.

The business, located on the southwest corner of Busch Boulevard and N. 56th Street, is the first to apply for the city's Commercial Façade Grant Program. The program was established to help businesses near the targeted first phase of the downtown redevelopment area to make improvements to the exterior of their sites.

For Firestone, that means new landscaping that will add a touch of the Mediterranean to the area.

Four other businesses have expressed interest in applying for the grant, though they have not yet officially filed the paperwork.

"Improving the looks of downtown is one of the objectives" of the program, said outgoing Redevelopment Director Ralph Bosek. "This will make a huge difference."

"It's just going to be amazing," he added.

Firestone Manager Alan White said that the project consists of replacing the existing landscaping with new palm trees and "sprucing up" the store. Other new foliage planned for the site include crotons and a bird of paradise.

"It's not a real pretty corner," he said. But he hopes that once the work is done, Firestone will become a focal point on the corner.

The store has worked out about \$7,600 worth of landscaping it wants to plant on the site. Of that, Firestone is requesting just under \$3,800 in grant funds.

The grant will reimburse businesses 50 percent of their costs for improvements \$10,000 or less or a maximum of \$5,000 for projects that are more than \$10,000.

Businesses are requested to apply by June in order to be considered for the grant funding this year.

Landscaping is not the only type of work that could be reimbursed through the grant program.

Others include:

- Façade reconstruction and/or architectural improvements
- Painting of façade
- Parking repavement and/or restoration or replacement of deteriorated sidewalks
- Installation of exterior lighting
- Exterior wall repair (stucco, brick or wood repairs and replacement)
- Installation of architectural details (bollards, railings, decorative metal trim)
- Installation of awnings
- Installation of new signage

In all, the city has set aside \$50,000 for the grant program, which is being funded through the Tax Increment Fund.

According to the grant program's write-up on the city's Web site, the city wants businesses to incorporate one of the following architectural styles:

- Spanish Renaissance Revival
- Mediterranean Revival
- Or St. Augustine Spanish Colonial.

For more information about the Commercial Façade Grant Program, contact the new redevelopment director, Michael Marshall, who has been hired to replace Bosek, who is retiring effect Friday, May 30.

The Fine Print

Source: www.TempleTerrace.com

Eligibility Restrictions and Requirements:

No grant monies or matching monies shall be used to perform general repair, structural or habitable work or otherwise to meet code requirements.

No grants would be made to government-owned properties, to tenants in government-owned properties, or non-profit organizations.

Properties listed for sale may not apply.

Properties sold within one year of receiving façade funding must repay the full amount; properties sold within two years of receiving façade funding must repay 50% of the amount received.

Work on the project must begin within 90 days following the City approval process.

Applicant may reapply if deadline is missed.

Interior improvement may not be considered a part of the project's scope of work unless it is an alteration needed due to changes in storefront construction.