



MEMO

TO: Caribou City Council Members
FROM: Penny Thompson, City Manager
DATE: March 25, 2024
RE: Façade Improvement Grant in the RC-2 TIF District

The City of Caribou has had a successful façade improvement grant program for several years in the Downtown TIF District. There has been interest from business owners to also have a façade improvement grant program in the RC-2 TIF District. Staff checked with Maine Department of Economic and Community Development who have communicated that one could be established.

As part of the 2024 budget process, the City Council has appropriated funding for the façade improvement grant program. The initial grant period will have a due date of April 12 and the grant awards voted on at the April 22 City Council meeting.

On the following pages is the application and a map of the RC2 District. Note: the map included is the one that is most clear among the ones available. However, it has a parcel marked in pink which was the subject of a previous project. There is no significance to the pink parcel for the purposes of the façade improvement grant!

If your property is in the RC-2 TIF District and you have a façade improvement project and could use some assistance to make it happen, please fill out the attached application and return before April 12. If you have any questions, please reach out to:

Penny Thompson (207) 493 – 5961 pthompson@cariboumaine.org

Judy Kleeman (207) 493 – 5962 jkleeman@cariboumaine.org

City of Caribou Facade Improvement Grant



The City of Caribou Facade Improvement Grant Program is a proposed partnership between the City of Caribou and private sector building owners to improve the exteriors of commercial and mixed-use properties in Caribou. The program offers matching grant funds for the purpose of restoring/renovating commercial storefronts and poor-quality commercial signs and awnings to combat blight and boost the economy in our community.

Program Summary

- The program is structured as a 50/50 matching grant for improvements to the exterior of businesses located in Caribou that are visible from the street.
- The program is open to commercial or mixed-use property located in the RC-2 Tax Increment Financing (TIF) District where the funding for this program is generated.
- The intent of this program is to:
 - Encourage property owners to make visible improvements to their businesses; and
 - Enhance the unique character and aesthetic appearance of the City of Caribou; and
 - Maintain community structures to minimize the economic impact of blight.
- Grant recipients will be reimbursed up to fifty percent (50%) - not to exceed \$7,500 - of the cost of eligible expenses upon satisfactory completion of the work.
- The City will provide these funds through an annual competitive application process with an application deadline of March 15, except for the initial application period which will be Friday April 12, 2024. If funding is available, a second application period will be held with an application due date of September 30. Notice of fund availability will be advertised in a newspaper of general circulation, on the city's website and social media platforms no less than thirty days prior to the application deadline (except for the initial application period in 2024).
- The Facade Improvement Committee will review, and award applications based on the criteria for eligible projects outlined below. The committee will make recommendations to the Caribou City Council at the meeting following the application date. Applicants will be notified of their awards within ten days of the

City Council meeting.

- **Eligible Projects**

Facade Improvement Grant funds are available for improvements of any commercial property within the RC-2 TIF District in Caribou that meets the following **criteria**:

- To be eligible for reimbursement, all improvements must be visible from a public right-of-way and located in Caribou's RC-2 TIF district. For more information or to find out if your business is in the TIF district, visit: <http://bit.ly/CaribouBusinessAssistanceProgramming>
- Examples of eligible improvements include, but are not limited to:
 - Repairs or improvements to the exterior siding
 - Cleaning, repointing, or removing paint from exterior brick
 - Restoring or replacing windows
 - Restoring or replacing doors
 - A fresh coat of paint
 - Signage enhancements (masonry, skirting, ornamental lighting, etc.)
 - Decorative or privacy fencing
- The maximum City contribution for each grant application is as follows:
 - Major façade restoration: up to \$7,500
 - New coat of paint: up to \$2,000
 - Signage Enhancements: up to \$1,500
 - Sign face changes: up to \$750
 - Fencing: up to \$2,000

All awards are subject to funding availability. The City reserves the right to award funding in a manner it deems appropriate to meet the intent of these funds and assist as many properties as possible. Requests may not be fully awarded.

- Each applicant may only be awarded one grant per calendar year per parcel.
- Projects must be completed within 18 months of award.

Program Requirements

- Work must comply with all City of Caribou code's including local ordinances and the Maine Uniform Building and Energy Code (MUBEC).
- Projects must have all appropriate permits *and* be designed by a qualified design professional.
- Requests related to signs must have designs produced by a professional sign maker/printer. The design of all proposed signage must be submitted with the Façade Grant application. The proposed signage must comply with all applicable codes and ordinances. A sign permit must be obtained, and all work must be done in compliance with *Caribou Land Use Ordinance Sign Regulations*. If signage is on a Maine Department of Transportation maintained road, signage must meet MDOT standards.
- If the property has been declared dangerous by the Caribou City Council in accordance with *MRSA Title 17 §285*, the applicant shall not be eligible.

- The applicant must provide written estimates for all work for which they wish to be reimbursed. Only eligible expenses will be reimbursed. Upon completion, the applicant must provide receipts for completed work and/or supplies. Funds will be disbursed only after satisfactory completion of the approved work and documentation is received by the city.
- Upon request, a ribbon cutting ceremony will be planned by the City Staff and City Council to celebrate the improvements and raise awareness in the community.
- Applicants must be property owners or tenants with the property owner's written consent.
- The site for which funds are requested shall not have outstanding code violations or tax liens.

Application Review Process

- Grant candidates will be selected and recommended by a four (4) member committee, which includes : one member of the Caribou City Council, the Caribou Economic Growth Council, the Caribou Planning Board, and the Caribou Development Committee. The City Manager, Code Enforcement Officer, City Building Official, and the Superintendent of Parks and Recreation will advise the committee. The Caribou City Council will announce the final approval and selection of recipients.
- When determining which applications will receive funding, priority will be given to:
 - Projects that demonstrate the greatest overall need / urgency
 - Permanent structures
 - Buildings with high visibility and/or large street frontages
 - Material quality
 - Contribution to placemaking
 - Consistency with the comprehensive plan
 - Business retention and expansion capabilities from award
 - Wayfinding assistance
 - Use of local labor for the work
 - Applicants who did not receive funding during the previous grant cycle
 - Blight remediation

Application Procedure

- The application is available on the City of Caribou website (www.cariboumaine.org) under Departments/Economic Development. Applications may be obtained in person at the Caribou City Office, 25 High Street.
- The deadline to apply is 4:30 p.m. on March 15 or September 30 or next business day if deadline falls on a weekend. (except for the initial grant period which will have a deadline of April 12, 2024.)
- Applications must include all relevant information, including a written summary of the request and need and/or urgency for the funds, a cost estimate for the proposed work, photographs of the project location, and design drawings or photo mockups.
- The selection committee may conduct applicant interviews.

- This grant is taxable and will need to be reported to the IRS. W-9 forms will be required to issue the reimbursement and are attached to the application.
- You may submit the application by mail, in person, or by email to jkleeman@cariboumaine.org. If applying by mail or in person, please submit the application to:

City Manager's Office
City of Caribou
25 High St.
Caribou, ME 04736

Questions? Contact Us:

Penny Thompson
City Manager
pthompson@cariboumaine.org
(207) 493-5961

Judy Kleeman
Office Coordinator
jkleeman@cariboumaine.org
(207) 493-5962

The City of Caribou is committed to cleaning up blighted properties and restoring community vitality. The Facade Grant program is one of the tools that can be used to counteract, prevent, and reduce the effects of blight on community enhancement and economic development endeavors. The City is authorized by the state to have a Facade Improvement Grant Program using funds from Tax Increment Funds collected each year. For more information, and to join the Blight Fight, please see our Blight Toolkit at www.cariboumaine.org.

Facade Improvement Grant Program Application

Applicant Name: _____

Address: _____

Address of structure: _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

Describe project in detail (*please attach photos & other information as appropriate*):

Proposed Project Costs (*please attach estimates*):

Contractor	Labor	Materials	Total Bid

The total City of Caribou contribution for each grant application is the **lesser amount** of 50% of the project cost or the following project maximum :

- Major façade restoration: up to \$7,500
- New coat of paint: up to \$2,000
- Sign face changes: up to \$750
- Signage Enhancements: up to \$1,500
- Fencing: up to 2,000

Estimated Total Project Cost: _____ Grant amount requested: _____

Applicant Signature: _____



Legend

- R-C2 TIF District Project Site
- Caribou Parcels (UMPI 2010)
- R-C2 TIF District
- RC2 TIF Parcels Divided
- RC2 TIF Parcels Undivided

1 inch = 600 feet

