

# City of Tallahassee

## Frenchtown Housing Rehab Program

### Overview

#### **Background**

According to longtime Frenchtown residents, the quality of the neighborhood's housing stock has declined as structures aged. As of 2018, approximately 71% of the structures in the neighborhood were built before 2000. As a community's housing stock ages, the need for maintenance, repairs and upkeep of its housing becomes a critical issue. Some Frenchtown residents have limited resources to repair and maintain their homes and community resources that may be available to help residents make the needed repairs are also very limited. With the neighborhood's median income at just over \$24,000 annually, some residents are not in a financial position to prioritize home repairs or improvements. As of March 2020, there were 36 active code enforcement cases in the Frenchtown neighborhood, including 19 citations for substandard buildings and six for dangerous buildings. Frenchtown residents have stated that unkept vacant lots, dilapidated homes and abandoned homes detract from the vibrancy of the neighborhood and contribute to negative perceptions.

The Frenchtown neighborhood, working through the City of Tallahassee's Neighborhood First planning process, has developed a strategic neighborhood plan that outlines goals, strategies and action items to address rehabilitation of the community's housing stock, among top neighborhood priority issues.

#### **Frenchtown Neighborhood First Plan**

The Frenchtown Neighborhood First Plan seeks to find ways to mobilize both financial and human resources to help all residents to live in safe and affordable homes. The plan includes strategies and action items which call for the establishment of housing rehabilitation program for the Frenchtown neighborhood. The plan states;

*Strategy H 1.1:* Promote the repair and reuse of existing structures.

*Action H 1.1.2:* Develop and implement a comprehensive housing rehabilitation program that provides grants and loans for interior and exterior home repairs/improvements. Funding for interior repairs should be limited to owner-occupied homes. Consider including incentives/protections for tenants as a criterion for landlords to receive funding from this program.

*"D" Streets Block by Block Affordable Housing Demonstration Project Guidance:* One approach the neighborhood would like to pursue is to focus housing initiatives/programs (new construction, rehabilitation, repairs, and landscaping) first in one section of the neighborhood. The "D Streets" of Dent, Dewey, Dover, Dunn, Dean, Dade and Delaware would be targeted first in order to concentrate as much impact as possible in a defined area.

Funding: On July 1, 2021, the Tallahassee Community Redevelopment Agency (CRA) Board adopted and funded the Frenchtown Neighborhood First Plan and approved \$900,000 in funding for the implementation of a housing rehab program for Frenchtown. The Frenchtown Community Action Team's Housing, Economic Development and Community Reinvestment Priority Area Team, working in collaboration with City staff, was tasked to develop the housing rehab program based on strategies, action items and guidance provided by the Frenchtown Neighborhood First Plan.

## **The Frenchtown Housing Rehab Program**

### **What is the Frenchtown Housing Rehab Program?**

The Frenchtown Housing Rehab Program provides a 5-year forgivable loan to eligible Frenchtown homeowners and landlords to make repairs to homes located within the Frenchtown neighborhood of Tallahassee. The maximum funding provided by the program is up to for \$25,000 owner-occupied units and up to \$17,500 for renter-occupied units. It is funded by the Community Redevelopment Agency (CRA).

### **What is a Five-year forgivable loan?**

Individuals awarded a Frenchtown Housing Rehab grant will receive their award in the form of a loan that is taken at 0% interest, with payments deferred, and forgivable monthly over a five-year lien period. In accepting the grant award, the homeowner agrees to repay the outstanding balance of the loan upon the occurrence of any instance of default (for example, if the owner sells the home before the end of the five (5) years, the homeowner would be responsible to repay the portion of the loan that has not yet been forgiven). Please note that no funds will be given directly to the homeowner. The funds awarded to a homeowner will be administered by a program contractor who will work with the homeowner to complete the repairs on his or her home.

### **What does the Frenchtown Housing Rehab Program seek to achieve for the Frenchtown neighborhood?**

The Frenchtown Housing Rehab Program, based on strategies, action items and guidance provided by the Frenchtown Neighborhood First Plan, seeks to:

- 1) Preserve and strengthen Frenchtown's existing housing stock;
- 2) Make an impact, in collaboration with other housing programs, on the neighborhood's housing stock on the "D" Streets in the Frenchtown community;
- 3) Provide financial incentives to income eligible homeowners to make repairs to their homes
- 4) Provide financial incentives to landlords whose rental properties are occupied by income eligible tenants to make repairs to their properties; and
- 5) Prioritize improvement to designated historic homes (local, state, or national registry) and homes over 50 years old.

Revitalizing the Frenchtown neighborhood through the preservation of the neighborhood's existing housing stock is essential to the livelihood and continued vibrancy of the community. By funding needed housing repairs, the Frenchtown Housing Rehab Program will aid in keeping

residents in their homes, ensure that neighborhood homes are free from health and safety hazards, and preserve the housing unit to allow current residents to age in place and/or provide future residents with decent and safe housing.

### **Who is eligible to receive funding for home repairs from the Frenchtown Housing Rehab Program?**

- Resident homeowners (owner-occupied residences) who meet the following qualifications:
  - Home is located in the Frenchtown neighborhood and within the boundaries of the Frenchtown/Southside Community Redevelopment District.
  - Total household income is 80% or less of the area's median income (AMI). Applicants will have to provide income information for all adults residing in the home.
  - For homes with multiple owners, all owners must sign the grant application.
  - All property taxes and municipal debt are paid and/or be current with the City of Tallahassee and Leon County. This includes City of Tallahassee utilities, property taxes, code liens, etc.
- Property owners (landlords) who meet the following qualifications:
  - Own an occupied rental housing unit within the Frenchtown neighborhood and within the boundaries of the Frenchtown/Southside Community Redevelopment District. to ensure location is within the given boundaries.
  - Tenants of the rental housing unit is 80% or less of the area median income. The landlord must provide income information for all adults residing in his/her rental home.
  - All property taxes and municipal debt are paid and/or be current (have an agreement for settlement for the debt) with the City of Tallahassee and Leon County. This includes City of Tallahassee utilities, property taxes, code liens, etc.

### **What is the maximum funding I can receive from the Frenchtown Housing Rehab Program?**

The maximum award each funded applicant will receive is based on the occupancy status of the housing unit for which the grant is intended:

- Owner-occupied housing units can receive a maximum award of \$25,000,
- Renter-occupied units can receive a maximum of \$17,500.

- Landlords can receive up to \$10,000 in funding without providing any matching funds. Any funding request beyond \$10,000 for a rental property must be matched dollar for dollar up to \$7,500 by the landlord.

### **Are renters eligible to apply for a grant from the Frenchtown Housing Rehab program?**

No. While certain housing types held for rental purposes are eligible to receive a grant from the program, renters cannot apply for the grant on behalf of their leased unit. Grants will be issued only to property owners. Property ownership will be verified using the Leon County Property Appraiser's database. Landlords applying for funding from this program must work with their tenants to qualify their tenants based on the income eligibility requirements for the program and to notify the tenant that they intent to apply for grants to improve their rental unit. All tenants must sign the Attachment A: Tenant Notification Form.

### **How will applications for the Frenchtown Housing Rehab Program be evaluated?**

The Frenchtown Housing Rehab Program is a competitive grant program. The applications received will be reviewed, scored, ranked, and then selected for funding based on the scores received. The scoring criteria for the program are:

- *4 points*: Home is located on a "D" Street (Dent, Dewey, Dover, Dunn, Dade, Dean, and Delaware)
- *3 Points*: Home is owner-occupied
- *2 Points*: Home is 50+ years old or designated historic by either a local or national historic preservation organization (owners of historic homes may also qualify for other City historic assistance, please reference talgov.com)
- *1 Point*: Home is renter-occupied

### **Will everyone who applies for a grant from Frenchtown Housing Rehab Program get funded?**

No, there is limited funding for this program. In the first funding cycle for the Frenchtown Neighborhood First Plan, the CRA Board approved \$900,000 in funding for housing rehabilitation programs.

Completed applications received by the closing date for the program, will be reviewed and scored using the scoring criteria established for the program. Scored applications will be grouped by the scores received and starting with the highest scored applications, they will be randomly selected for funding.

### **What types of home repairs will the Frenchtown Housing Rehab Program fund?**

The type of repairs funded by the program will differ based on the occupancy status of the housing unit: owner-occupied vs renter-occupied.

**Owner-occupied homes** may have both interior and exterior repairs done, while for **renter-occupied homes** only exterior repairs will be funded.

### **What are some examples of the repairs that will be funded by the Program?**

The specific repairs that will be made to each funded home will be determined jointly by the contractor and the homeowner/property owner. However, funded repairs will be prioritized to address code and safety compliance first; health/environmental health second; and energy efficiency third.

Examples of each prioritization may include, but are not limited to:

- Code and safety compliance: Faulty roof, leaking sewerage, structural issues
- Health/environmental health: Dangerous tree, mold remediation
- Energy efficiency: Insulation, drafty windows, weather stripping, water heater

Examples of eligible repairs include the following:

- Roof repair or replacement
- Plumbing
- Structural issues
- Tree Removal (limited to safety concern)
- Hot water heater
- HVAC/Heat/Air replacement or installation
- Smoke detectors
- Energy efficiency (window and door replacement)
- Insulation
- ADA accessibility repairs
- Electrical
- Sewage repair or connection
- Other, as deemed necessary by contractor

### **When and how can I apply?**

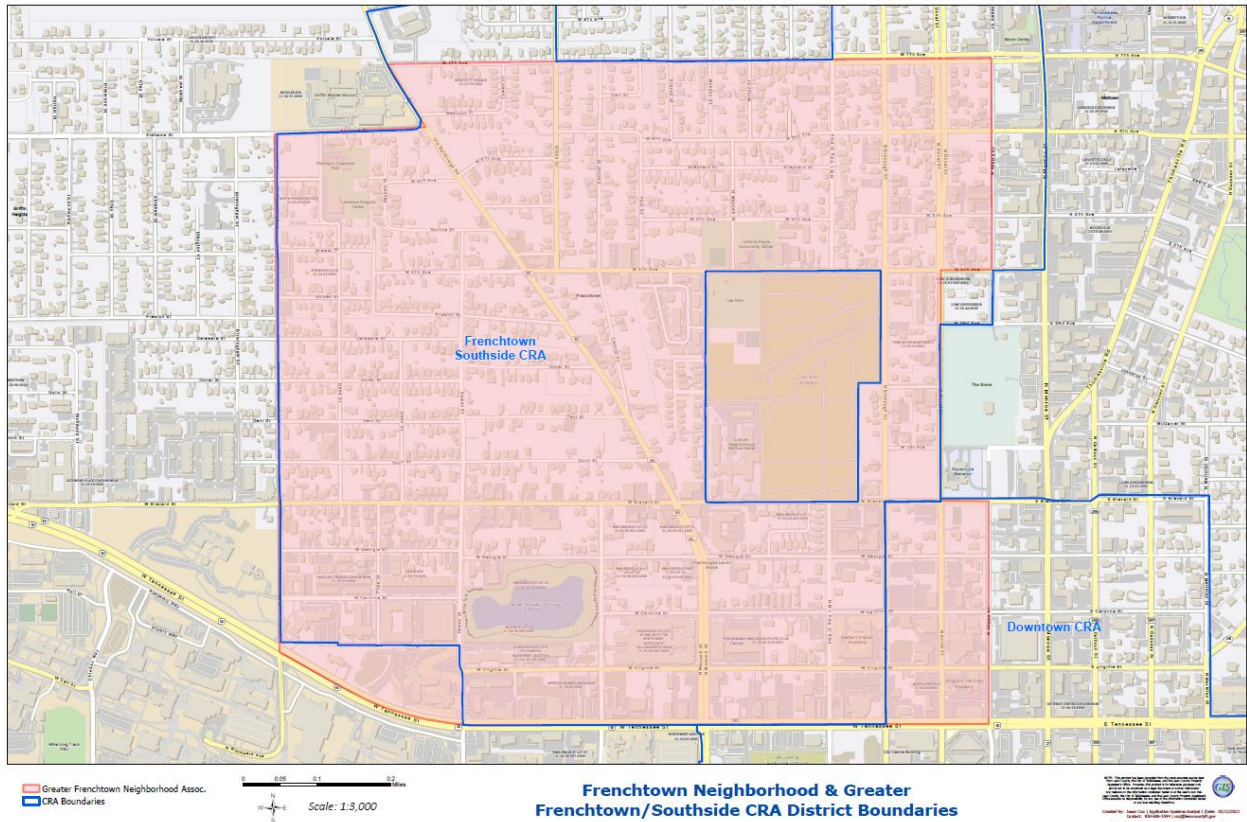
Interested and qualified applicants must apply through the City's [Neighborly Software portal](#), submitting an electronic application by the given deadline.

### How much funding is available for the program?

The CRA Board approved \$900,000 for a housing rehabilitation program in Frenchtown.

### What are the neighborhood boundaries of the Frenchtown neighborhood?

All awarded homes to be rehabbed must be within the Frenchtown CRA District as outlined in the map below.



### If I am awarded a grant from the Frenchtown Housing Rehab Program, what can I expect?

You can expect to be paired with a contractor secured by the City that will lead the rehabilitation. The contractor will conduct a walk through of the home to determine the necessary, and eligible, work to be completed. The contractor will work with you on a timeline and the funding from the program will go directly from the City to the contractor for the work completed.

### How will funds be disbursed?

Funds will be distributed to the contractor directly from the City for the work completed.

**How and who decides what repairs will be completed?**

A home inspection will be conducted by the contractor along with the homeowner to determine what repairs are eligible and most needed on the home. Code repairs addressing health and safety issues are the highest prioritization for repairs to be funded, followed by energy efficiency and environmental health concerns. The homeowner and contractor will agree on what repairs will be made. A copy of the executed contract will be submitted to the City from the contractor.

**What are my responsibilities as a landlord/owner of a renter-occupied unit that receives assistance through this program?**

Owners will be responsible for agreeing to the work conducted by the assigned contractor, prioritizing code and safety first. For renter occupied units, the landlord is responsible for notifying current tenants of the prospective work to be completed in the unit, potentially causing a temporary disturbance. Landlords must agree to not increase the rent amount more than the local Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA) for five consecutive years after the rehabilitation and will attest the same in the grant agreement they will execute.

**Can a vacant home be eligible for the Frenchtown Housing Rehab Program?**

No. All homes must be occupied, whether owner occupied, or renter occupied.

**Can I receive multiple awards in the same year?**

No. Each awardee is only eligible for one funding award per funding cycle.

**What are the eligible housing types?**

All housing types that are eligible to be homesteaded are considered eligible housing units. This typically includes single family homes, duplexes, etc. that have the option to be homesteaded. If the home doesn't have homestead declared yet, they may submit a utility bill showing they are the owner and residing in the home.



**If an awardee passes away, what is the protocol?**

If an awardee passes away and construction has not started yet on the home, the applicant and home will be withdrawn from the program. If a successor wants to be reconsidered for the program, they will have to resubmit an application to be scored with their information (name, income, etc.). If an awardee passes away while construction has already started, the home's enrollment in the program will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis to determine next steps.

**Can a corporation apply for a grant under this program if the corporation owns a home in Frenchtown?**

Yes. If an applicant is applying for a grant for a home that is owned by a corporation, the primary applicant must complete the "Corporation Form" under the required documents section of the application. This form allows the applicant to list the primary contact for the application and shows that the applicant has the authorization to submit an application on behalf of the corporation's board.

**Can I receive assistance in completing my application?**

Yes. Please reach out to the Neighborhood Affairs Division at 850-354-1926 or [Neighborhoods@talgov.com](mailto:Neighborhoods@talgov.com) to schedule one on one technical assistance in completing applications.