



**WAUCHULA COMMUNITY
REDEVELOPMENT AGENCY**

Annual Report

FY 2021 - 2022

BACKGROUND

The Wauchula Community Redevelopment Agency (CRA) was established in 1997 under Chapter 163, Part III, Florida Statutes, which authorizes municipalities to create a community redevelopment agency after finding that there were existing areas of slum and blight within the municipality.

Like other rural communities in the area, Wauchula has, and continues to face challenges including stagnant population growth, decline in employment in many primary industries, fewer development opportunities, extreme weather events, and uncertainty associated with primary economic anchors. Historically, the City has been known for its agriculture (primarily cucumbers and citrus) and phosphate mining industries, cattle ranches, and affordable seasonal housing for retirees. (KHA Redevelopment Plan Update 2019)

The initial CRA area included 1,536 acres, covering over 2.4 sq miles of the City of Wauchula. Upon adoption in 1997, the CRA was established for 25 years. In 2010, the CRA conducted another Finding of Necessity and determined that an additional 16 parcels within the city boundaries met the qualifications necessary to be included within the CRA. This brought the CRA boundaries to 1,579.6 acres or 79% of the city at the time. This Finding of Necessity also found value in extending the life of the CRA an additional five years, to the 30-year maximum allowed by statute. A new sunset date was adopted in 2010 as 2027. In 2019, upon meeting criteria set forth in the statute, the life of the CRA was extended again another 30 years. The CRA will sunset in 2057.

The CRA Board is comprised of the five commissioners elected to office to serve the City of Wauchula. Their terms as board members will follow their terms of office.



DISTRICT 1
Mayor Pro Tem
Neda Cobb



DISTRICT 2
Russell Graylin Smith



DISTRICT 3
Mayor
Keith Nadaskay



DISTRICT 4
Sherri Albritton



DISTRICT 5
Gary Smith

CRA RESOLUTIONS AND ORDINANCES

Resolution 97-09 - the City of Wauchula (City) determined and declared there existed a need for a community redevelopment agency to function in the City to carry out redevelopment purposes pursuant to the Act

Resolution 97-10 - the Commission declared itself the CRA in the City

Ordinance 97-834 - the Commission readopted and reaffirmed Resolutions 97-09 and 97-10, and established a Redevelopment Trust Fund pursuant to Section 163.387 of the Act

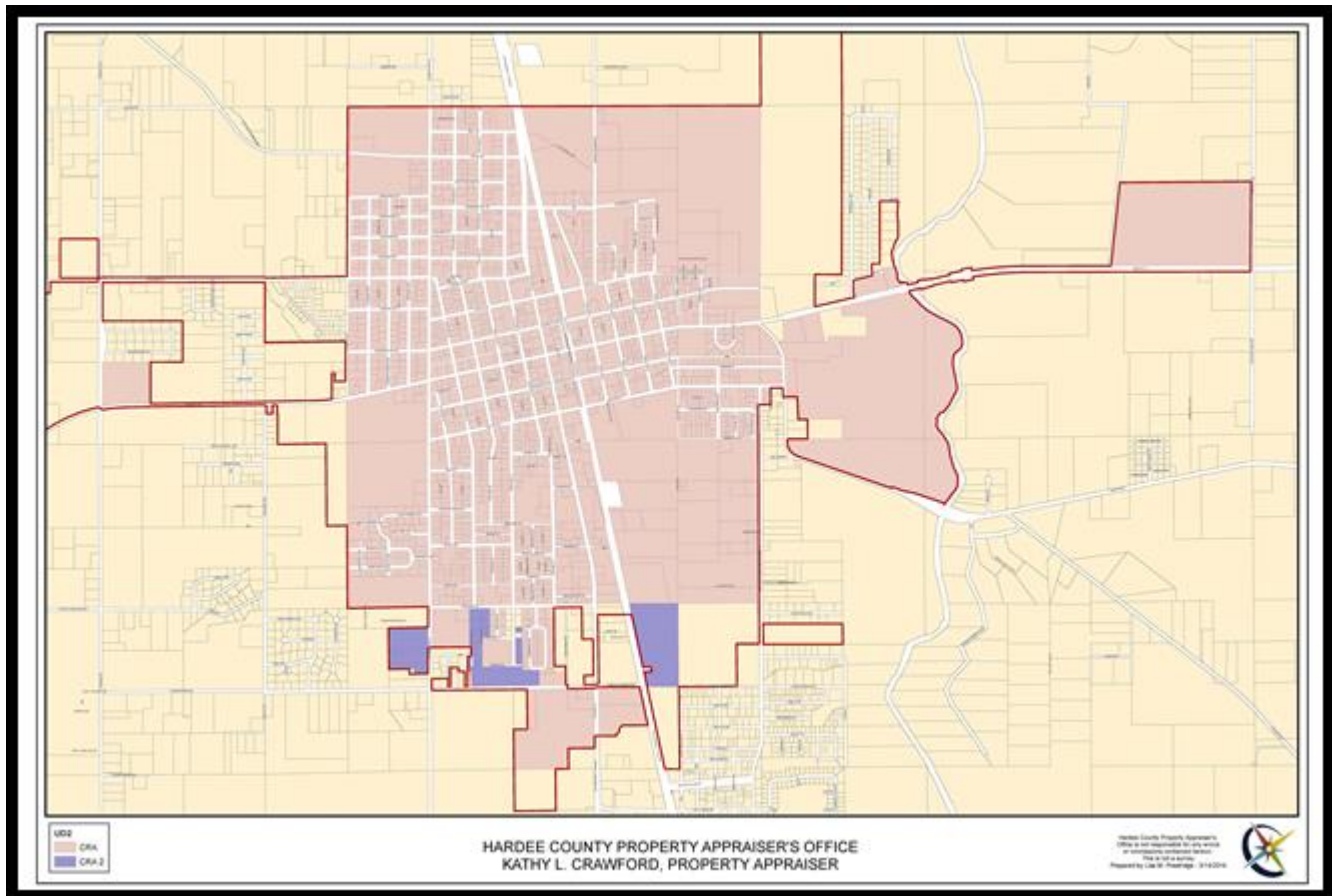
Resolution 2009-25 - the CRA and Kimley-Horn and Associates, Inc. ("KHA"), entered into an agreement through which KHA provided an evaluation and comprehensive update to the Community Redevelopment Plan (the "Plan") emphasizing programmatic and project-specific implementation consistent with the CRA boundary

Resolution 2010-24 – on August 9, 2010, the City modified the community redevelopment plan following presentation of the Plan Update 2010 to the City of Wauchula Planning and Zoning Board (the "P&Z") on June 21, 2010 and a public hearing by the CRA on July 12, 2010

Resolution 2011-01 – the CRA expanded the boundaries of the area and extended the timeframe to provide redevelopment activities within the CRA boundaries after supporting data and analysis found the existence of conditions that warranted these updates

Resolution 2019-10 – on September 16, 2019, the CRA adopted Plan Update 2019 following a public hearing held on September 9, 2019 with amendments focused on: 1. Updated capital improvements plan (CIP) and related tax increment (TIF) projections, 2. Neighborhood impact, including affordable and workforce housing, 3. Downtown parking study, 4. Parks and recreation facilities, 5. Extension of the CRA term date from 2027 to 2057

REDEVELOPMENT AREA



The Wauchula Community Redevelopment Area currently consists of 1,688 parcels within the limits of the City of Wauchula.

(215 of those parcels do not generate property tax)

FUNDING SOURCE

The CRA Trust Fund is funded through tax increment financing (TIF). TIF revenue is a unique tool used by cities and counties for the purpose of redevelopment activities. The goal of this tool is to leverage public funds to promote private sector activity within the redevelopment area.

TIF collected by the CRA is equivalent to 95% of the value of property taxes collected for that year, minus the base year.

YEAR	REAL VALUE	CITY TIF	HC TIFF	TOTAL TIF
1997	49,606,576.00	BASE YEAR	BASE YEAR	0.00
1998	49,697,530.00	433.00	756.00	1,189.00
1999	53,463,866.83	18,395.00	32,064.00	50,459.00
2000	54,358,701.00	22,429.00	39,095.00	61,524.00
2001	56,775,965.00	33,957.00	57,498.00	91,455.00
2002	58,610,200.00	42,383.00	71,764.00	114,147.00
2003	62,965,725.00	60,488.00	97,619.00	158,107.00
2004	66,750,022.00	71,457.00	123,939.00	195,396.00
2005	66,311,246.00	64,911.00	118,503.00	183,414.00
2006	87,855,237.00	163,290.00	292,751.00	456,041.00
2007	105,030,345.00	231,018.00	364,750.00	595,768.00
2008	107,884,517.00	251,523.00	395,356.00	646,879.00
2009	107,225,708.00	248,117.00	390,002.00	638,119.00
2010	98,430,945.00	202,649.00	318,533.00	521,182.00
2011	90,623,689.00	172,260.00	260,868.00	433,128.00
2012	95,001,510.00	178,072.00	269,699.00	447,771.00
2013	85,794,162.00	168,029.00	254,460.00	422,489.00
2014	85,921,642.00	168,905.00	266,106.00	435,011.00
2015	88,352,787.00	181,501.00	285,952.00	467,453.00
2016	93,823,536.00	210,798.00	332,109.00	542,907.00
2017	98,850,941.00	237,776.00	374,611.00	612,387.00
2018	101,788,080.00	252,949.00	399,442.00	652,391.00
2019	107,059,323.00	281,169.00	448,542.00	729,711.00
2020	113,370,109.00	310,361.00	492,032.00	802,393.00
2021	119,512,654.00	342,766.00	543,172.00	885,938.00
2022	133,790,867.00	418,091.00	662,538.00	1,080,629.00
TOTAL	1,296,385,944.83	4,333,727.00	6,892,161.00	11,225,888.00

MASTER REDEVELOPMENT PLAN UPDATE 2019 GOALS



2019 Wauchula CRA – Community Redevelopment Plan September 2019

IV. CRA GOALS

The 2019 Plan has broad-based CRA Goals, identified below, which serve as a guide for capital improvements and programming of projects in the following chapters of this Plan. The goals touch upon a variety of topics and aspects of the City, including land use, economic development, and transportation and mobility. These categories are an encompassing approach to all aspects of duties and responsibilities of the CRA, from actual physical improvements to marketing and support services for businesses in the CRA.

Land Use

- Adaptive reuse and redevelopment of buildings
- Identify and support partnerships with private properties with emphasis on historic building renovations
- Use infrastructure investments to leverage, focus, and shape the location and intensity of development
- Continue brownfield clean up and redevelopment
- Provide incentives to provide for both single-family and multi-family housing, as well as affordable and workforce housing, as needed
- Focus on infill housing developments and develop assistance/partner on programs for home ownership

Economic Development

- Cooperation and continued partnership with Main Street Wauchula Inc. to promote economic development and to raise awareness of businesses in the CRA boundaries
- Keep open potential for bonding of improvements in the future
- Establish a prioritization of grant projects and assistance including ROI (TIF revenue thresholds)
- Continue to identify additional non CRA funding options including but not limited to grants and private funding

Transportation & Mobility

- Improved traffic flow
- Monitor parking in the downtown and evaluate the need for additional parking (should the need arise)
- Explore opportunities for multimodal services, as needed
- Safer travel ways for pedestrian and bicyclists, including development of more sidewalks and general roadway improvements
- Reduced heavy vehicle impacts
- Increased traffic safety

Cultural & Recreational Resources

- Unify the community through activities in City parks including fitness activities, music, and movies
- Redevelop Crews Park and begin construction of Peace River Park
- Identify new park opportunities including those at the neighborhood level
- Follow and implement park redevelopment per parks master plan where economically feasible
- Work with local partners to bring cultural activities to historic City auditorium

2022 ACCOMPLISHMENTS AND PROJECT UPDATES

MULTI-FAMILY WORKFORCE HOUSING - ONGOING

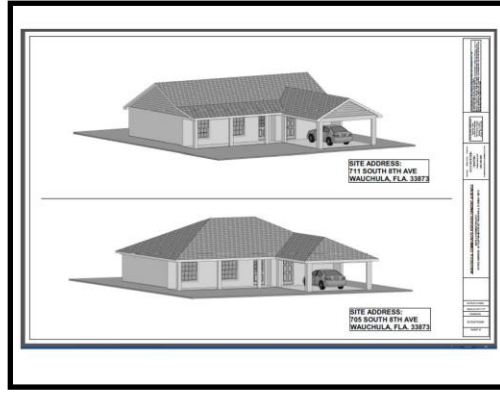
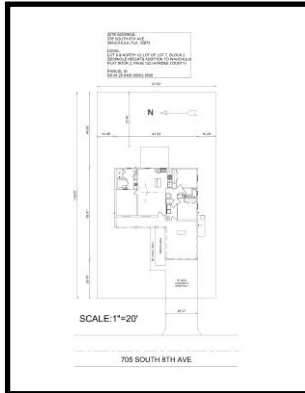
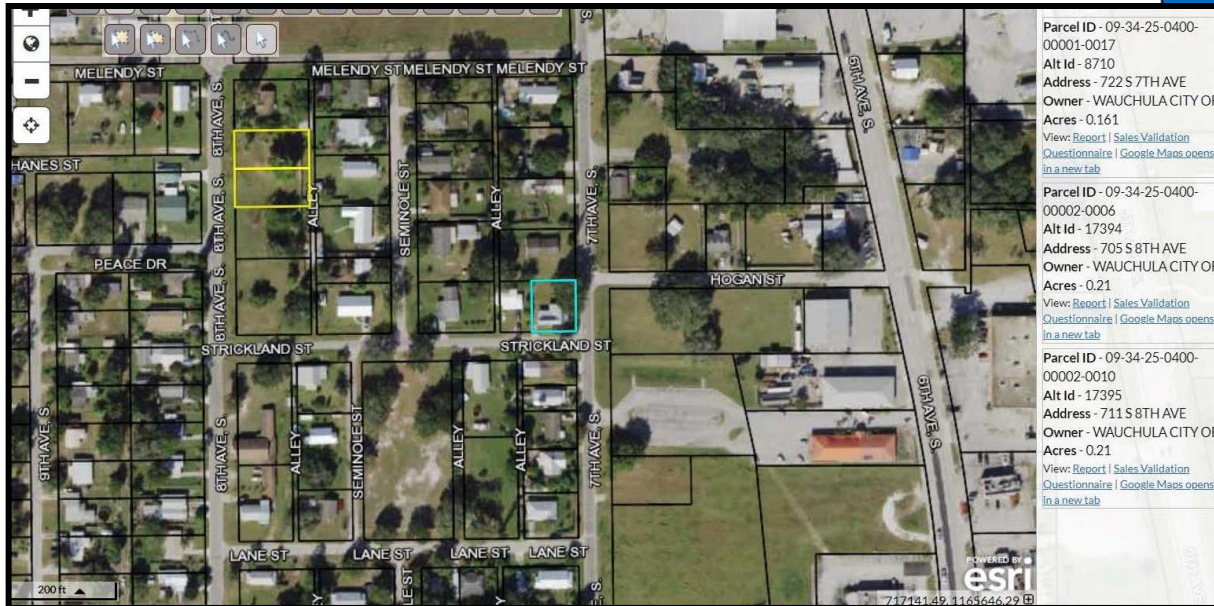
Following the Land Use goal, “Provide incentives to provide for both single-family and multi-family housing, as well as affordable and workforce housing, as needed”, the CRA has continued to work with Palmetto 8 in hopes of seeing this project come to fruition.

Palmetto 8 has experienced a number of delays over the past 5 years. However, in the latter part of 2022, progress was made. The CRA Director, City Manager, and IDA COO toured the project. At that time, the apartments were close to being completed. At the September 12, 2022 CRA Board meeting, the funding agreement was extended through January 31, 2023. The motion included that no additional extensions would be granted after that date.



IN-FILL HOUSING – ONGOING

In May of 2022, the City of Wauchula deeded 3 parcels to the CRA to be included in their in-fill housing program. During the remainder of the year, the CRA worked on house plans that would not only fit on the small lots but also contribute aesthetic appeal to the neighborhood.



Continued work to provide affordable housing in the CRA area aligns with F.S. 163 Part III and is specifically addressed in the CRA Masterplan Update 2019 under Land Use:

- Provide incentives to provide for both single-family and multi-family housing, as well as affordable and workforce housing, as needed
- Focus on infill housing developments and develop assistance/partner on programs for home ownership

PARKS AT PEACE RIVER – ONGOING

The Parks at Peace River Project continues to be a focus for the CRA. This public improvement, five phase project, is covered under the CRA Masterplan Update 2019 under Cultural and Recreational Resources:

- Unify the community through activities in City parks including fitness activities, music, and movies
- Redevelop Crews Park and begin construction of Peace River Park
- Follow and implement park redevelopment per parks master plan where economically feasible

PARKS AT PEACE RIVER PHASE II - ONGOING

Construction of the Crews Park Pavillion began in 2021 and is ongoing. The pavillion is Phase II of the five phase Parks at Peace River Project includes the construction of the main pavillion. The pavillion will include restrooms, a deck area for picnicing, a kiosk for a potential vendor, and a storage area for kayaks and canoes.

The project came to a standstill in 2022 when the contractor had to be let go. CRA staff has updated the bid packet and will be ready to advertise for a new contractor in the spring of 2023.



PARKS AT PEACE RIVER PHASE III – COMPLETED

The playground in Crews Park was completed in June of 2022. Among the play equipment there is a bird's nest swing, regular swing, and a handicap harness swing. There is a musical instrument table surrounded by concrete to allow for easier wheelchair accessibility, a seesaw, and a play tower complete with slide and bridge. The area has 2 benches and trash receptacles and is completely fenced to provide added safety given the proximity to the river. The already existing tree canopy makes this park a true treasure for Wauchula.



PARKS AT PEACE RIVER PHASE IV - V – ONGOING

This phase of the parks project includes additional primitive campsite, new and refurbished hiking trails, parking, picnic areas, signage, and a connecting path to Crews Park. In June of 2021 this phase was bid with the contract being awarded to

Cobb Site Development. Because this phase is covered by two grants; Florida Recreation Development Assistance Program (FRDAP) and Recreation Trails Program (RTP), in addition to permits being required by Southwest Florida Water Management District (SWFWMD) and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps), construction did not begin the fall of 2022. Project completion is scheduled for May 2023.



LANDSCAPE & LAWN CARE – ONGOING

According to FDOT, there are an estimated 20,000 vehicles traveling Hwy 17 North and South daily and another estimated 4,500 traveling through downtown Wauchula. It is for this reason, as well as the pride of our residents, that the CRA continues to place a high priority on beautification.



BROWNFIELD - ONGOING

The brownfield site at 226 W. Main Street continues to be monitored. Contamination levels have yet to decrease enough nor been maintained at a level allowing for closure. We continue to monitor and work with FDEP on further steps.



Fortunately, the remediation work has not impacted any business activity in the area and those businesses located on and around the site continue to thrive.

The CRA continues to help offset the cost of monitoring and remediation with the Florida Department of Environmental Protection's Voluntary Clean-Up Tax Credit Program. This program allows the CRA to claim 50% of the cost incurred during the year, for remediation of a brownfield site, in tax credits which are then sold on the open market.

Brownfield Clean-up helps eliminate slum and blight and is addressed in the CRA Masterplan Update 2019 under Land Use:

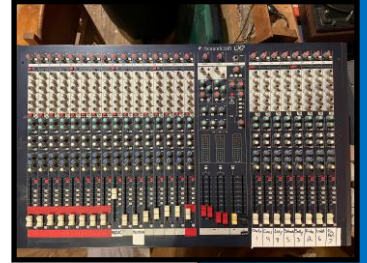
- Continue brownfield clean-up and redevelopment

HISTORIC AUDITORIUM RENOVATIONS - ONGOING

The Wauchula CRA has focused on revitalizing the city's historic city hall since it was listed as a catalyst project in the 2010 Masterplan. In the Masterplan Update 2019, the focus remained a goal under Cultural & Recreational Resources: Work with local partners to bring cultural activities to historic City auditorium.



Over the years small steps have been taken to aide in bringing this once thriving theater back to life. The real momentum however, was gained in 2022 when a check for \$300,000 was received from Mosaic. In addition, in 2022, the City was awarded a Historic Preservation Grant applied for by the CRA.



With funds received from Mosaic, the CRA issued an RFP for a firm that could upgrade and install an audio/visual system. This would include a movie projector and screen, speakers, monitors, sound board, and lighting. Having an improved A/V system would not only enhance the productions put on by the newly reactivated Hardee Players, but also allow for visiting performers as well as provide better movie quality. This work is anticipated to begin in the spring of 2023.



The Historic Preservation Grant awarded in July of 2022 will allow for the renovation of the ceiling, refurbishing of the windows, and create accessibility to the stage (both front and rear), as well as to the backstage restroom and dressing room areas. Construction is anticipated to begin in the summer of 2023.

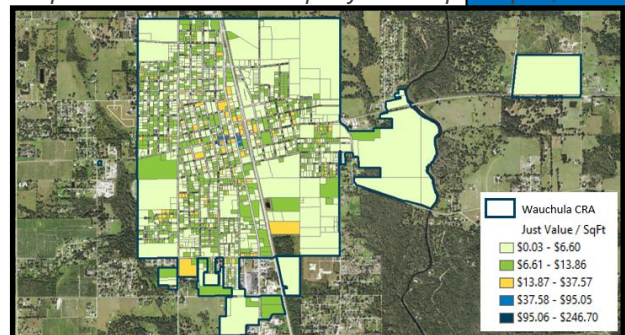
TIF ANALYSIS - COMPLETE

In 2022 the CRA wanted to self-evaluate the use of TIF dollars collected since the creation of the agency. An analysis was conducted to evaluate historic revenue streams, inventory major investments, and describe investment outcomes for three sample projects.

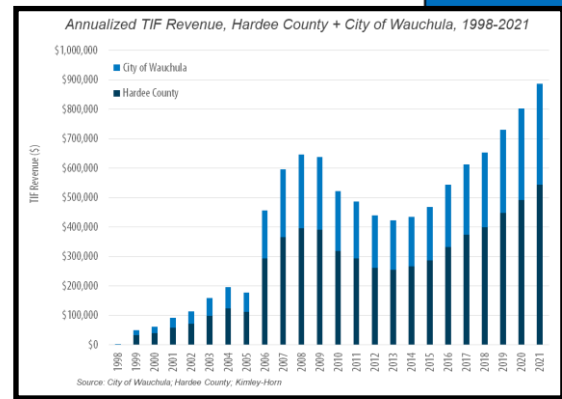
Key results from the analysis include:

- The CRA experienced a 57.4% increase in valuation over the last ten years while Hardee County experienced 36.3%

Map of Wauchula CRA Property Values per Sq.Ft., 2021



- TIF monies have supported \$5.4 million in investment and leveraged to attract \$5.8 million in other funds
- Over \$1.0M was invested in four parking lots and several stormwater improvements
 - Improved area saw 185.8% increase per square foot over a ten year period while other CRA properties only saw a 74.8% increase over the same time period
- The CRA and IDA partnered with a private investor to incentive \$350k for a mixed use rehab project at 131 W. Main Street
 - Rehabilitated property saw a 549.6% increase per square foot over a ten year period while other CRA properties saw 74.8% increase over the same time period
- The CRA and IDA partnered with a private investor for a newly constructed mixed use project
 - Constructed on vacant land, the property value increased from \$70k to \$2.3M
 - The improved property saw a 2,435.6% increase per square foot over a ten year period



In summary, this analysis demonstrated that properties within the CRA increased in value at a higher rate than the county as a whole. In addition, properties surrounding major CRA investments showed a greater increase in value compared to other properties within the CRA. The TIF dollars spent have served to aide in the elimination of slum and blight through developments, infrastructure enhancements, public investments, and beautification.

FARR FIELD - ONGOING

2022 brought the completion of construction documents for Farr Field. This project is the result of a Parks Masterplan adopted as part of the Master Plan Update 2019. With public input, the plan evaluated five parks owned by the City of Wauchula and looked at potential opportunities to ensure that city residents had access to a variety of outdoor recreation activities.



Park renovations are in compliance with the Master Redevelopment Plan goals falling under Cultural & Recreational Resources:

- Unify the community through activities in City parks including fitness activities, music, and movies
- Identify new park opportunities including those at the neighborhood level
- Follow and implement park redevelopment per parks master plan where economically feasible

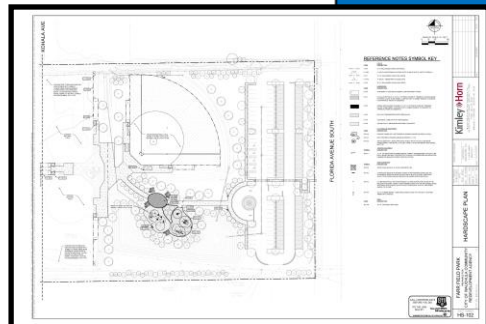
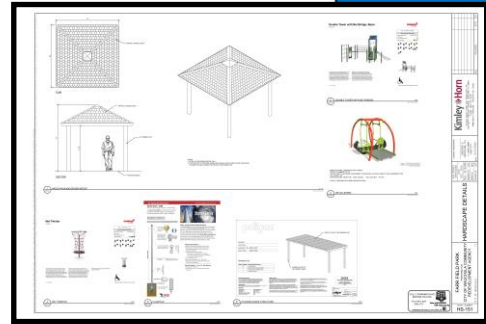
Farr Field will provide residents on the southwest quadrant of the city, closer access to a playground which features a wheelchair accessible swing as well as other play equipment. In addition, a third softball field will allow for the park to be utilized for tournaments, bringing visitors to the city. A key feature for the park will be the splash pad. Currently, Hardee County residents only have access to the public pool, several miles from the downtown, only open to the public during summer months. This splash pad will provide a cool and refreshing option for residents that do not have access to the pool, or may not know how to swim. A parking area and picnic sites will round out the parks features, making a true asset to the community.

An EDA grant was received in 2020 to fund the design, permitting, and construction documents for Farr Field. All was completed in 2022 and ready to bid. The City has submitted an appropriation request for construction.

HWY 17 PARKING LOT - ONGOING

Under the CRA Master Plan Update 2019, Transportation & Mobility includes a goal to “Monitor parking in the downtown and evaluate the need for additional parking”. This parking lot project is located along Hwy 17 N, behind a set of historic buildings, under renovation by The Development Group, as well as the Historic City Auditorium. Because business will increase in that area and there is already an increase in activity at the auditorium, this parking lot falls in line with that goal and addresses a need.

Working with both the business slated to occupy the renovated buildings, and FDOT, the design was completed at the end of the year and submitted to FDOT for a final review and permit approval.



MAIN STREET WAUCHULA, INC

The CRA Redevelopment Plan Update 2019 lists “Cooperation and continued partnership with Main Street Wauchula, Inc. to promote economic development and to raise awareness of businesses in the CRA boundaries” as a goal to further economic development. This relationship has proven successful over the year for the CRA in part because the organizations goals align.

Main Street Wauchula, Inc. maintains both a Main Street America accreditation as well as a Florida Main Street designation. With the collaboration of many volunteers, the downtown business owners, and local government, Main Street Wauchula, Inc. strives to bring about economic development by preserving the very core of our community.

Highlights for the year include but are not limited to:

- Logged 909 volunteer hour through a variety of activities that promoted downtown businesses, brought the community together in the downtown, beautified the downtown, created memories, and shared our history
- Awarded \$5,155.00 in grants to assist downtown businesses
- Saw a minimum average increase of 25% in attendance at all downtown events; promoting our downtown to residents and visitors
- Kicked off the school year and gathered the community downtown with over 4,000 in attendance to the Wildcat Tailgate Party
- Continued to have fun downtown with Palooza in the Park and Open Mic
- Kicked off the Christmas shopping season in downtown Wauchula with record Brunch in the Park tickets sales and almost 2,000 shoppers on Shop Small Saturday; Businesses saw over 13% increase in sales over 2021
- Concluded the Historic Auditorium seat cushion project with the purchase of the remaining 167 cushions
- Created an “We’re Open” on Saturday’s social media campaign ensuring the public knows there are shopping and dining options and worth the trip downtown
- Promoted downtown businesses organically on social media with the 2nd Annual Selfie Week
- Grew more young local entrepreneurs with 30 vendors at the 4th Annual Student Business Fair
- Began work with SBDC to offer a workshop series for entrepreneurs to be offered in 2023
- Continued to foster the artistic talents of local students with the 2nd roll out of Student Summer Banner Program
- Provided design assistance to Main Street Grille as well as The Development Group for 126 W. Main Street



EXPENSE	
EXECUTIVE SALARIES	\$ 79,453.63
PROF SERVICES - GENERAL	\$ 9,628.81
ACCOUNTING AND AUDITING	\$ 2,622.50
CRA MASTER PLAN	\$ 40,722.52
CONTRACTUAL SERVICES	\$ 51,372.26
BROWNFIELD CLEANUP	\$ 103,635.81
SPONSORSHIPS & PROMOTIONS	\$ 6,581.85
TRAVEL & PER DIEM	\$ 565.76
COMMUNICATION - TELEPHONE	\$ 962.51
RENTALS & LEASES	\$ 12,000.00
INSURANCE	\$ 1,412.83
REPAIRS & MAINTENANCE	\$ 22.92
PRINTING & BINDING	\$ 1,597.20
OPERATING SUP & EXP	\$ 698.70
BOOKS, PUBLICATIONS & ED	\$ 768.00
PROP TAX - INCOME PROPERTIES	\$ 2,209.65
STORM WATER UPGRADES	\$ 9,000.00
ENTRYWAY SIGNS	\$ 51,204.00
CREWS PARK	\$ 152,428.00
PRIN - CRA PROJECTS	\$ 29,545.58
INTEREST - CRA PROJECTS	\$ 559.60
GRANTS - RESIDENTIAL	\$ 10,214.42
GRANTS - COMMERCIAL	\$ 394,401.80
CONTRIBUTIONS-MAIN ST PRO	\$ 25,000.00
AUDIT ENTRIES	\$ 196.11
	\$ 986,804.46

The CRA Fund is audited annually and included in the city's financial statements as a special revenue fund. At the time of this report, the FY 21-22 report was not complete. The FY 20-21 report can be found at <https://www.cityofwauchula.gov>



WAUCHULA COMMUNITY REDEVELOPMENT AGENCY
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