



CITY OF HIGH SPRINGS COMMUNITY REDEVELOPMENT AGENCY (CRA) ANNUAL REPORT 2021-2022 FISCAL YEAR

This report provides an overview of the Community Redevelopment Agency's 2021-2022 achievements and introduces projects either in the conceptual stages or currently underway for 2022-2023.

INTRODUCTION

Under Florida law (Chapter 163, Part III), local governments are able to designate defined areas as Community Redevelopment Districts for the purpose of carrying out redevelopment activities such as revitalizing dilapidated buildings and neighborhoods, improving public infrastructure and amenities, creating jobs and enhancing the quality of life for residents. Community Redevelopment Districts must maintain separate trust funds and expend those funds only in their designated districts. Community Redevelopment Agencies administer the activities and programs offered within Community Redevelopment Districts. Community Redevelopment Boards direct the activities of Community Redevelopment Agencies.

The High Springs Community Redevelopment District was created by the City of High Springs in December 1986. The CRA District encompasses approximately 107 acres consisting of the downtown business district and surrounding area. The CRA District is managed by the Community Redevelopment Agency which has two staff members, an Executive Director and CRA Manager, and it is governed by the CRA Board which has five members, a CRA Chair and four CRA Board Members.

The Community Redevelopment Plan serves as the primary guide for all CRA activities. The original CRA Plan was adopted in 1986. In August 2021, a new Community Redevelopment Plan was adopted by the CRA Board. It contains seven Strategic Initiatives that have been identified as key catalysts to guide redevelopment in the CRA District. The seven Strategic Initiatives are economic development, sense of place and appearance, transportation access and mobility, civic and open spaces, environmental sustainability, standards and regulations, and keepers of the vision.

CRA BOARD

Chair Tristan Grunder
Board Member Gloria James
Board Member Ross Ambrose
Board Member Byran Williams
Board Member Katherine Weitz

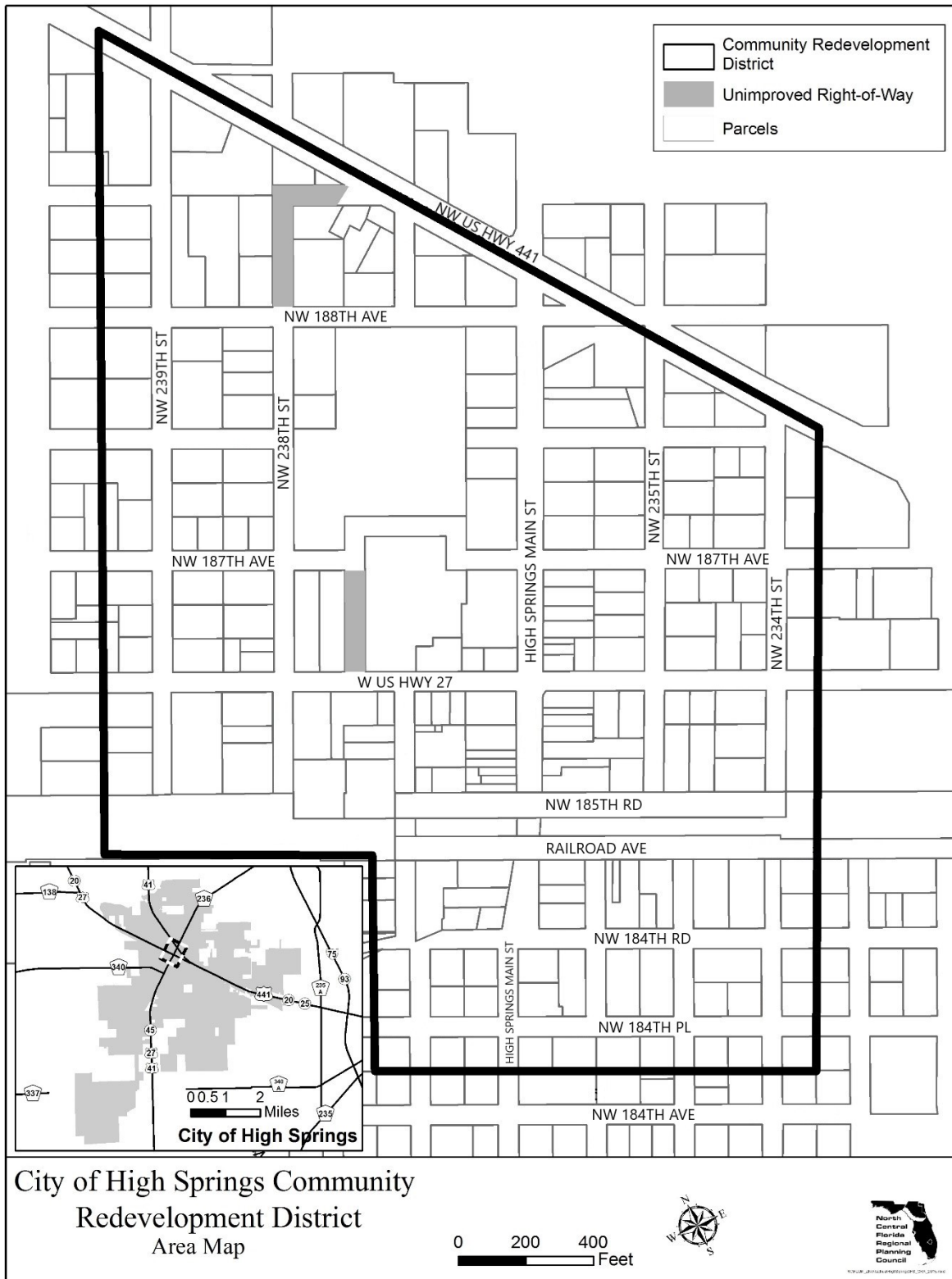


CRA STAFF

Bruce Gillingham
Executive Director

Amy Bohannon
CRA Manager

CRA District





PROJECTS

Finding of Necessity for Expansion

In August 2022, the CRA completed a Finding of Necessity for Expansion. The existing CRA redevelopment district is generally bound by NW US 441 to the north, and up to the first parcels east of NW 234th Street, the first parcels west of NW 239th Street, and the first parcels south of NW 184th Place. The CRA redevelopment district expansion area is located on the west side of the existing CRA redevelopment district. It is generally bound by NW 187th Avenue to the north, NW 246th Street to the west, and NW 184th Road to the south. The proposed expanded CRA redevelopment district comprises both areas. The existing CRA redevelopment district encompasses approximately 107 acres. The proposed expansion area would add an additional 58 acres for a total of 165 acres.

The Finding of Necessity for Expansion assesses conditions of blight in the proposed expanded CRA redevelopment district. In accordance with F.S. Chapter 163.355, a detailed examination of existing land use characteristics and other indicators is required. The conclusion of the Finding of Necessity for Expansion report was that the proposed CRA redevelopment district does meet the requirements necessary to support expansion of the area. Based on these conclusions, the City is in the beginning stages of discussing the proposed expansion with County officials.

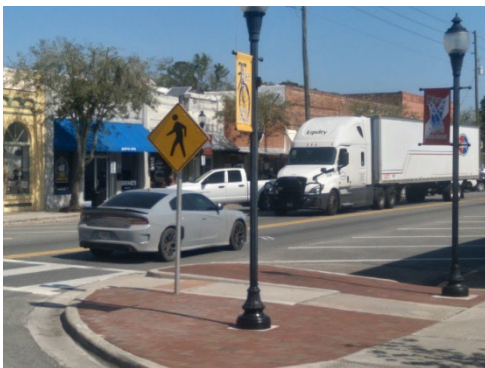
Facilities Plan

GAI, Community Solutions Group, has been engaged this past year to create a master plan for the eight acres of publicly owned land around City Hall, identified in the CRA Strategic Plan as the Civic Campus-a place that can accommodate a variety of uses, for both new civic facilities and enhanced recreational open space. The purpose of the master plan is to plan for High Springs's future and ensure public land and facilities in the CRA District are utilized to their highest and best use. The Facilities Plan is approximately 50% complete.

Infrastructure Improvements

The following infrastructure improvements were made in the 2021-2022 fiscal year.

- Sidewalk, curb, gutter and drainage improvements made along Railroad Avenue near the CRA Building (Completed)
- LED Flashing Crosswalk System installed at 184th Street and 27th Street (Completed)
- New safety railings installed outside the Chamber of Commerce Building (In Progress)



LED Flashing Crosswalk System



Sidewalk, Curb, Gutter & Drainage Improvements

FAÇADE GRANT PROGRAM

The High Springs CRA Façade Grant Program provides businesses within the CRA district the opportunity to renovate the exterior of their building. Its purpose is to enhance the aesthetics, character, and vitality of the CRA district. This grant allows for up to \$5000 for projects such as painting, siding, windows and doors, awnings, and other exterior improvements.

| Business | Amount |
|-----------------------|---------------|
| Two Finger Properties | \$15,000 |
| Barber Building | \$15,000 |
| Gavitt Building | \$5,000 |
| Prohibition Pizza | \$5,000 |

Properties Before Façade Improvement Grant



Properties After Façade Improvement Grant



PLACEMAKING ACTIVITIES

Promoting a sense of place is a major focus area of the CRA. Projects that improve the aesthetic appearance of the CRA District bring energy and vitality to the downtown area.

The CRA invested in new banners and decorations for the light poles downtown. Patriotic and seasonal banners adorned the light poles during the spring and summer months. Fall and Christmas decorations adorned the light poles during the fall and winter months.

Major landscaping improvements were made throughout downtown. Dead and outdated trees and shrubs were removed and replaced with new native trees and shrubs. Hanging plants were added in designated areas. Riverstone rock finished out the design of the newly landscaped spaces.

In 2021-2022, a local non-profit agency, the Heart of High Springs, planned and funded a mural festival which was held in March 2023. Several buildings in the CRA district have now been beautified with murals celebrating the history of High Springs.



Downtown
Landscaping
Improvements

PROMOTIONAL ACTIVITIES

As the “Gateway to the Springs”, High Springs is strategically located near the Santa Fe River, Ichetucknee River, and several unique and beautiful Springs. People come from all over the country to “Enjoy Our Good Nature”. Ecotourism is a major part of the community’s local economy. One of the CRA’s larger marketing initiatives this year was the renewal of the billboard placed on I-75 Southbound, north of Lake City. This billboard was funded in part by a grant from the Alachua County Tourism Development Council.



The CRA partners with community organizations to sponsor several events throughout the year including an Art Walk Series, Social Soiree’s, Pioneer Days and the Annual Christmas Tree Lighting. The City is also in the process of putting together its first food, lodging and dining guide to distribute locally, to nearby hotels and information centers.

PERFORMANCE DATA

| | |
|--|---------------------|
| Projects Started & Completed | |
| Finding of Necessity of Expansion | \$14,000 |
| Facilities Plan (In Progress*) | \$5,000 |
| Sidewalk, Curb, Gutter & Drainage Improvements | \$15,000 |
| LED Flashing Crosswalk System | \$5,000 |
| CRA Building Improvements (Roof, Insulation, Misc.) | \$20,000 |
| Chamber Railings & Window Tinting (In Progress*) | \$1,000 |
| Façade Improvement Grant Program | \$40,000 |
| Downtown Landscaping Improvements | \$12,000 |
| Banners for Light Poles | \$4,500 |
| Fall & Christmas Decorations | \$16,000 |
| Promotional Activities & Sponsorships | \$14,000 |
| Total of All Projects | \$146,500 |
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| Number of Projects Started | 11 |
| Number of Projects Completed | 9 |
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| Total Amount Expended for Affordable Housing | 0 |
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| Total Expenditures from Redevelopment Trust Fund | \$266,416 |
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| | |
| 1989, Original Property Value of CRA District Upon Creation | \$3,382,000 |
| January 1, 2022 Taxable Value in CRA District | \$24,317,863 |
| | |
| | |

*Additional Funds to Be Spent Next Budget Year

Summary

The Community Redevelopment Agency Strategic Plan serves as the guiding document for CRA Projects and Programs. The document contains seven focus areas listed below:

Economic Development *

Sense of Place & Appearance *

Transportation, Access & Mobility

Civic & Open Spaces *

Environmental Sustainability

Standards & Regulations *

Keepers of the Vision *

In the 2021-2022 fiscal year, projects in the focus areas of Economic Development, Sense of Place and Appearance, and Standards and Regulations have been completed, and projects in Civic & Open Spaces, and Keepers of the Vision have been initiated. Plans are underway to initiate projects in Transportation Access & Mobility and Environmental Sustainability this fiscal year.

The CRA Strategic Plan adopted in August 2021 is serving the CRA District well. Many high priority projects have been completed. There is significant community support for the initiation of future projects.

The outlook for the future of the CRA District is bright. Activity is at an all-time high. Investments continue to be made in both the commercial and residential areas. Interest in the CRA District and its opportunities continues to increase. The CRA is taking a proactive approach towards keeping the CRA Strategic Plan on track and implementing the vision the community created during the planning process.