

2022 - 2023

# CITY OF HIGH SPRINGS CRA ANNUAL REPORT





## INTRODUCTION

A Community Redevelopment Agency (CRA) is a dependent special district in which any future increases in property values within the district are set aside to support redevelopment activities to eliminate conditions of slum and blight, improve the economic vitality of the district, and enhance the tax base through redevelopment activities and the establishment of public/private partnerships within the district. Community Redevelopment Agencies are authorized by Florida Statute (Chapter 163, Part III) and created at the local level by cities and counties for the purpose of carrying out redevelopment activities that include revitalizing dilapidated buildings and neighborhoods, improving public infrastructure and amenities, creating jobs, and enhancing the quality of life for residents.

The High Springs Community Redevelopment District was created by the City of High Springs in December 1986 to implement the community redevelopment activities outlined in Chapter 163, Florida Statutes. The High Springs CRA is set remain in effect through Fiscal Year 2030-2031. The CRA District currently encompasses approximately 109 acres comprised of the downtown business district and surrounding area. The five City Chamber Members serve as the CRA Board and help make decisions concerning the City of High Springs CRA district.

The Community Redevelopment Agency Plan serves as the primary guide for all CRA activities and projects. Community Redevelopment Districts must maintain an independent trust fund and expend those funds only in their designated districts. Community Redevelopment Agencies administer the projects within the CRA District. Community Redevelopment Boards direct the activities of the CRA. The High Springs CRA is funded through tax increment financing (TIF) contributions by Alachua County and the City of High Springs.

FY 2023 (October 1, 2022 - September 30, 2023) was a successful and productive year for the High Springs Community Redevelopment Agency (CRA). This report provides a brief highlight of the programs and activities supported by the CRA. The report also provides a brief financial overview of the CRA Trust Fund.



### **CRA BOARD** (FROM RIGHT TO LEFT)

**Chair Tristan Grunder**

**Vice Chair Katherine Weitz**

**Board Member Byran Williams**

**Board Member Gloria James**

**Board Member Ross Ambrose**

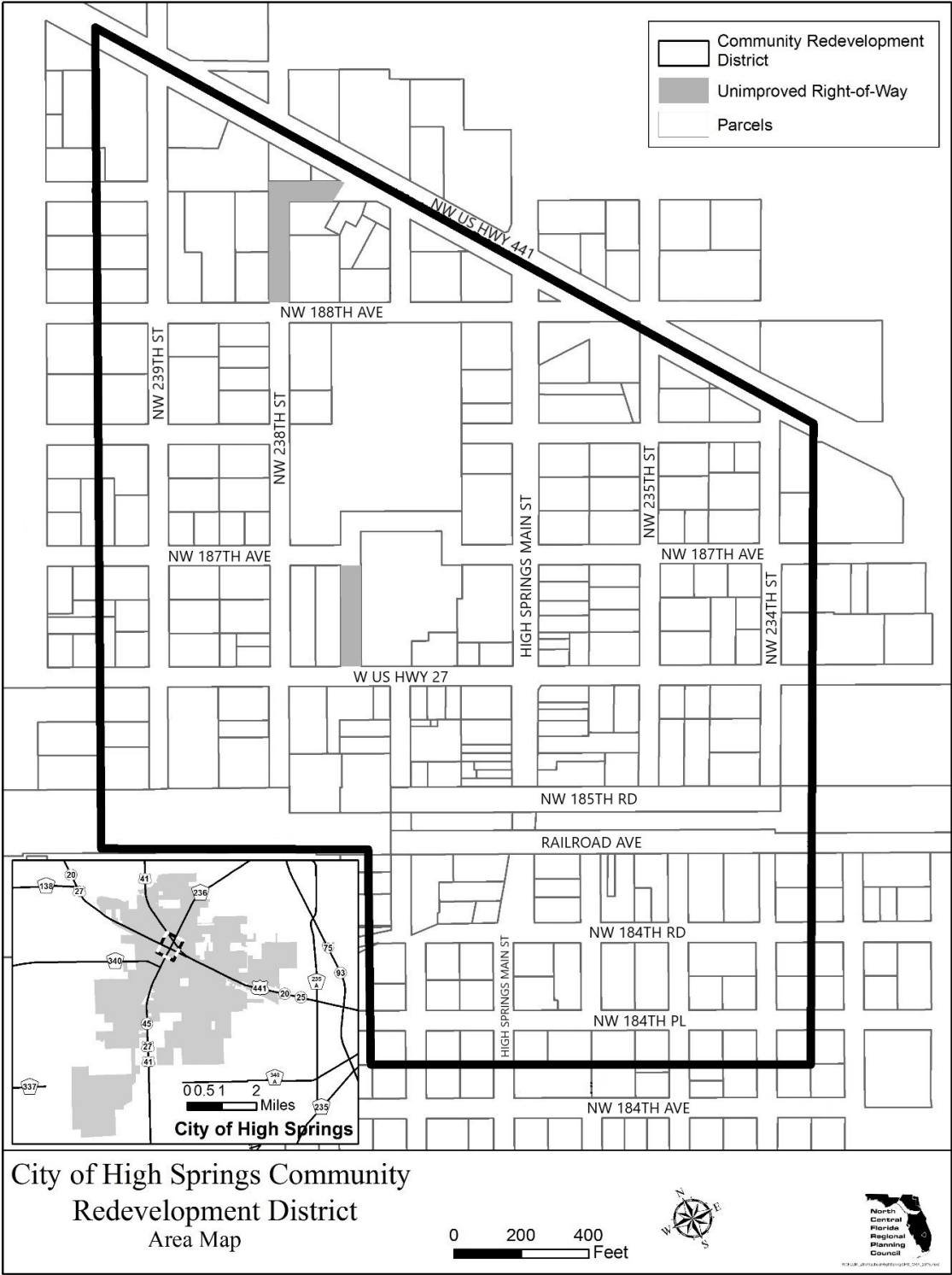
### **CRA STAFF**

**City Manager: Ashley Stathatos**

**Executive Director: Bruce Gillingham**

**CRA Manager: Amy Bohannon**

CURRENT CRA DISTRICT



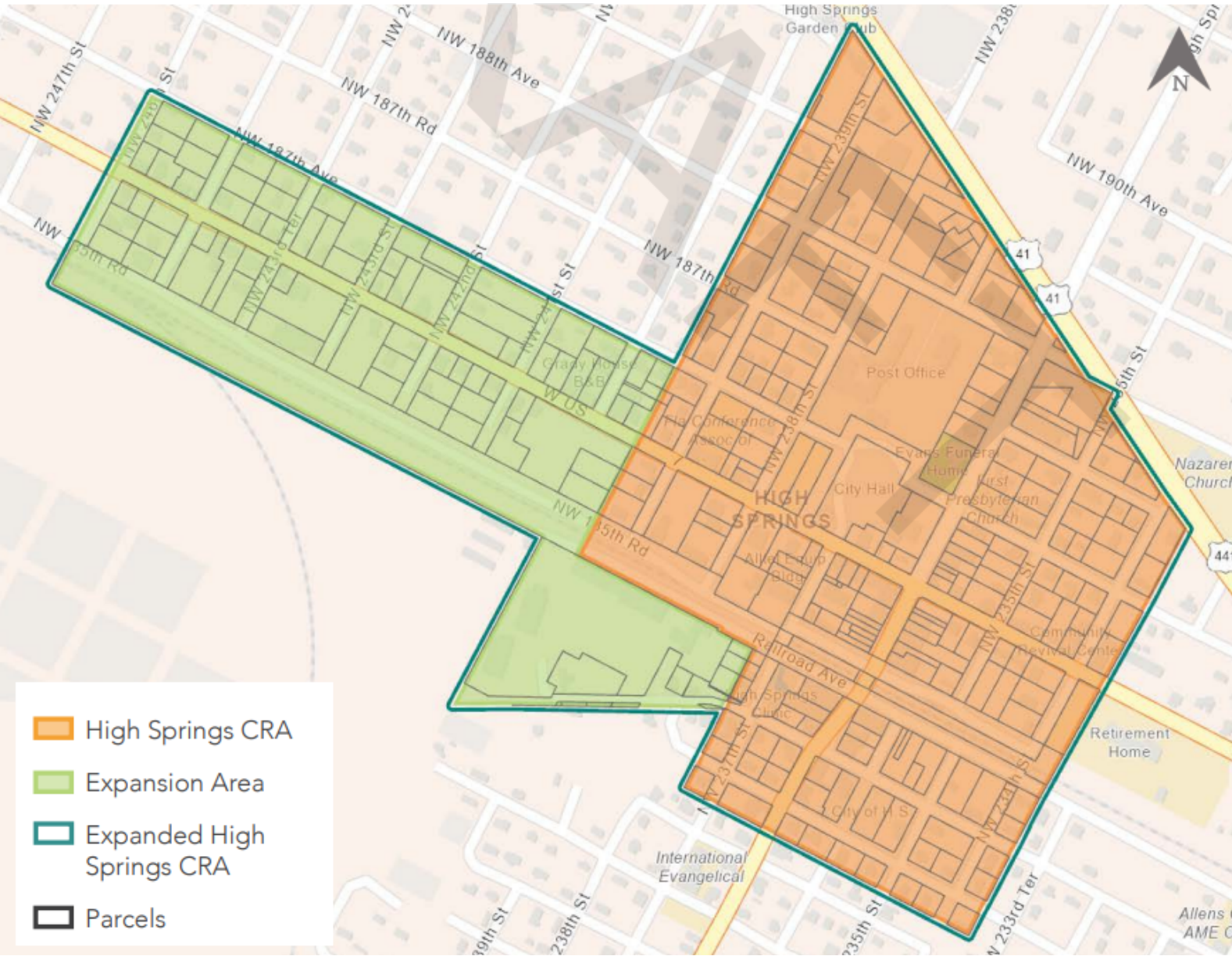


### GAI PLAN UPDATE

GAI Consulting rewrote our High Springs CRA Plan to include the need for expansion area based on the Finding of Necessity that was completed in August 2022 and adopted by the CRA Board August 2023. The updated plan was presented to the board and approved at the August 2023 meeting. The next step will be to present the updated plan to the Alachua County Commission for hopeful approval in 2024.



PROPOSED EXPANSION AREA





## FACADE GRANT

The grant matching program is used to assist in mitigating blight, increasing tax assessed values, and public appearance. For every dollar that the CRA put towards the facade grant, the property owner contributed at least one dollar. By leveraging CRA funds as matching grants, the money was invested back into the CRA district.

Prohibition Pizza received a \$5000 facade grant. The transformation from a rundown corner into a sophisticated centrally located Pizzeria is what this facade grant program is all about.

BEFORE



AFTER



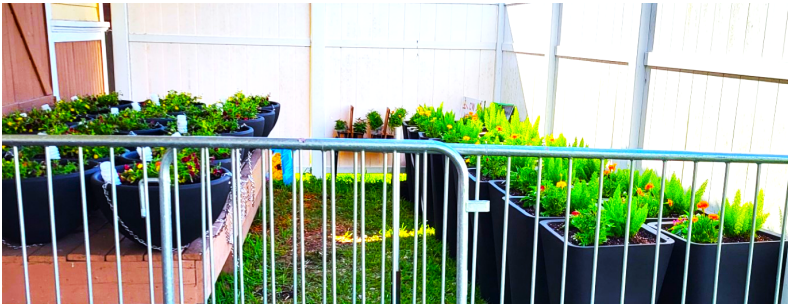
In FY 2023 the Facade grant was rewritten and updated to increase the potential total per grant from \$5000 to \$10000. Supporting grant documents were created and will roll out in late October 2023. With the current economic environment, we believe that this increase will encourage an escalation in revitalization efforts in the business district by the private sector.

## BEAUTIFICATION

In FY 2023 many beautification projects took place. New Fall banners, reworked wreaths, landscaping, planters, and hanging baskets were placed along Main ST, HWY 27, and NW 185th RD to beautify our wonderful community and enhance the charm and appearance.

## SELF WATERING DESERT PLANTERS

The planters and hanging baskets are self-watering containers that are carefully engineered to allow the plants to soak up what they need while conserving water and other resources. By requiring less hands-on daily maintenance, the planters are a conscientious environmental decision for our beautiful community.



## FALL BANNERS

Fall Banners were added to our banner program. The festive banners helped enhance the beauty and sense of Autumn in our CRA Business District.





## LANDSCAPING

Landscaping improvements were made throughout downtown. These improvements were planned in FY 2022 and were funded and completed in Spring 2023. Dead and outdated trees and shrubs were removed and replaced with new native plants. River rock and irrigation were added to finish out the function and design of the newly landscaped spaces.

## FLASHING LED LIGHT AT CROSSING

LED Flashing Crosswalk System was planned for in FY 2022 and funded and completed in FY 2023. The LED Flashing Crosswalk System was installed at NW 185th Road and High Springs Main ST. Brick pavers were added to round out project and improve the aesthetic appearance.

## HAND RAILINGS

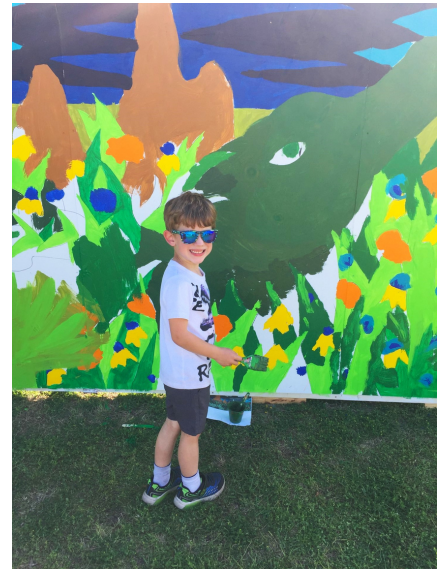
New safety hand railings were planned for in FY 2022 and funded and installed in FY 2023. The railings are outside the Chamber of Commerce Building.



## DOWNTOWN MURALS

A beautiful visual environment is absolutely essential to economic growth. It is also important for developing culture and remembering High Springs history.

Murals accomplish both goals. This year a local nonprofit, The Heart of High Springs held a festival The Walldogs Dive Into High Springs. Eleven downtown large-scale murals representing High Springs history and beauty were designed and painted during a three day festival. The murals are a representation of High Springs past, present, and future.



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|---|--|--|--|
| <p><b>A</b></p>  <p><b>SANTA FE RIVER</b><br/>South side of Air America Building</p>               | <p><b>D</b></p>  <p><b>PLANT RAILROAD</b><br/>South side of Dean Davis Building</p> | <p><b>G</b></p>  <p><b>THE EDUCATORS</b><br/>Under Farmer's Market Pavilion</p>            | <p><b>J</b></p>  <p><b>FLORIDA COWBOYS</b><br/>South side of Duke Energy Building</p> |
| <p><b>B</b></p>  <p><b>INDIGENOUS INDIANS</b><br/>East side of McCall's TV Sales &amp; Service</p> | <p><b>E</b></p>  <p><b>CHILDRENS MURAL</b><br/>Near HS Chamber of Commerce</p>      | <p><b>H</b></p>  <p><b>AGRICULTURE</b><br/>Under Farmer's Market Pavilion</p>              | <p><b>K</b></p>  <p><b>BELLEMY ROAD</b><br/>North side of Thompson's Flower Shop</p>  |
| <p><b>C</b></p>  <p><b>THE PRIEST THEATER</b><br/>South side of Prohibition Pizza</p>              | <p><b>F</b></p>  <p><b>CAVE DIVING</b><br/>Under Farmer's Market Pavilion</p>       | <p><b>I</b></p>  <p><b>HIGH SPRINGS SPEEDWAY</b><br/>South side of Dean Davis building</p> |   |





## APPROPRIATION FOR THE PRIEST

In FY 2023 the City of High Springs applied for and acquired an appropriation grant from the State of Florida, Department of State, Division of Historical Resources.

The Priest Theater is a 1910 era historic building located in downtown High Springs. It was one of the oldest running movie theaters in the state until COVID hit, upon which time it closed. In the last few years, the Priest Theater has encountered structural issues which make it uninhabitable. It now sits vacant and in blighted condition.

The Priest Theater is located on prime real estate in the heart of the downtown CRA District. Revitalization of the building will be a catalyst project that will stimulate development throughout the downtown area. As one of the longest running movie theaters in Florida, the Priest Theater is an important part of Florida's heritage. The state of Florida recognizes this and agreed to the appropriation grant of \$1,040,450 to preserve this cultural landmark. The state funds if accepted will be used to acquire the building, repair the roof, make structural improvements, etc. to prevent the collapse of the building and a loss of history.

The High Springs Commission will decide in FY 2024 whether to accept the appropriation and begin the acquisition process for the property.



## FACILITIES AND MUNICIPALITIES PLAN

GAI Consultants and city staff have been engaged in creating 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. It was created with community input to provide a plan for High Springs future and to ensure that public land and facilities in the CRA District are utilized to their highest and best use. The Facilities Plan is complete and ready to present to the CRA Board in 2024.





# COMMUNICATION AND PROMOTIONAL ACTIVITIES

## FARMERS MARKET

The CRA sponsors the High Springs Farmers Market to create a weekly event that not only provides access to fresh, local food but also builds community and brings visitors to the CRA District.

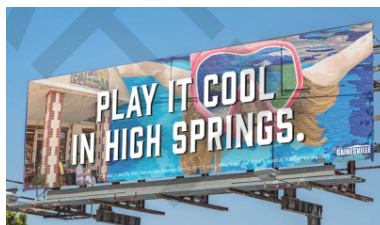
For over twenty years, the High Springs Farmers Market has provided space for local farmers, ranchers, and bakers to sell their fresh, wholesome products. With the High Springs Farmers Market being in existence for over twenty years it has reduced in size and attendance. We decided that it was time to evaluate the market, so we conducted a Farmers Market Workshop, Farmers Market Survey, and a Vendor Survey. The data shows that residents would like more variety and farmers.

The CRA is presenting the data to the board in 2024 for evaluation. Our goal is to invigorate the market and to bring awareness and excitement thus increasing community participation and attendance. In 2024 we intend to curate the High Springs Farmers Market into a destination and a perfect fit for the High Springs Community.



## BILLBOARD

Our historical and culturally significant Downtown CRA truly is a “Gateway to the Springs” and like any tourist community this requires sharing all that we have to offer. To better serve our business community and our residents, we renewed the billboard placed on I-75 Southbound, north of Lake City. In 2024 we will possibly look into alternate locations for the billboard in order to be the most effective.



# HOLIDAY POLICING INITIATIVES

The High Springs Police Department, in partnership with the High Springs CRA, developed an innovative comprehensive program to improve actual and perceived security within the CRA District. Area residents, businesses, customers, and tourists attend the many events in the downtown CRA Business District making it a destination location. Through an interlocal agreement, HSPD provided enhanced policing services to ensure the safety of all in attendance.

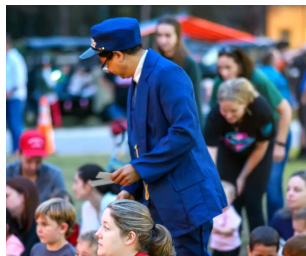




## EVENTS IN THE DISTRICT

This past year, the High Springs CRA district was home to many family friendly events. The High Springs CRA directly co-sponsored with the High Springs Chamber of Commerce, Kiwanis, the City of High Springs Police Department, and City Departments to strive to provide safe downtown events and initiatives. Below are several events that were held in the High Springs CRA District during FY 2023.

- WALL DOGS DIVE INTO HIGH SPRINGS (HEART OF HIGH SPRINGS)
- PIONEER DAYS (CHAMBER OF COMMERCE)
- FALL FESTIVAL (CHAMBER OF COMMERCE)
- ART WALKS (LANZA, UNIQUE NOTIONS)
- CHRISTMAS PARADE (CHAMBER OF COMMERCE)
- CHRISTMAS TREE LIGHTING (CHAMBER OF COMMERCE)
- CAR SHOWS (LYONS CLUB, HIGH SPRINGS BREWERY)
- PUMPKIN CARVING CONTEST (KIWANIS)
- AND MANY OTHER EVENTS IN THE CRA DISTRICT



## FINANCIALS

### PROJECTS STARTED & COMPLETED

• CRA Strategic Plan Update	\$14,700
• Municipalities Plan	\$38,700
• Priest Theater Appraisal	\$2850
• Farmers Market Consultant	\$4000
• LED Flashing Crosswalk and Brick Pavers	\$14,000
• Downtown Landscaping Improvements	\$13,000
• Self-Watering Planters and Plants	\$8000
• CRA Building Improvements	\$5300
• Chamber Rails and Sidewalk Repair	\$11,500
• Facade Improvement Grant Program	\$5000
• Fall Banners for Antique Light Poles	\$5100
• Holiday Decorations	\$20,000
• Policing Initiatives	\$9500
• Communication and Promotional Activities	\$7000

<b>TOTAL COST OF ALL PROJECTS</b>	<b>\$158,650</b>
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<b>Total Expenditures from Redevelopment Trust Fund</b>	<b>\$299,525</b>
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1989, Original Assessed Property Value	\$3,382,000
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January 1, 2023 Total Assessed Property Value	\$25,779,357
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The official budget and latest financial audit can be found on the City of High Springs website: [www.highsprings.gov](http://www.highsprings.gov)



## LOOKING FORWARD

The future fiscal year in the CRA District is full of promise. With the changes to the facade grant program the downtown businesses should be looking their best. We will continue to implement the vision the community created during the planning process and keep the CRA Strategic plan on track.

The CRA Strategic Plan serves as the guide to CRA projects and accomplishments. The focus areas of our plan include Economic Development, Sense of Place and Appearance, Transportation, Access & Mobility, Civic and Open Spaces, Environmental Sustainability, & Keepers of the Vision.

The High Springs CRA will strive to maximize the quality and impact of redevelopment for the benefit of High Springs citizens, visitors, our CRA, the City of High Springs, and Alachua County.



