

WINTER HAVEN

THE CHAIN OF LAKES CITY



COMMUNITY REDEVELOPMENT AGENCY

Annual Report

2023 - 2024

Contents

Note From Chair and Manager	3
CRA & Advisory Members	4
What is a CRA	5
Map of CRA	6
Finances	7
Featured Projects	10
Accomplishments	11
Closing Note	13

MESSAGE FROM THE CRA

The Winter Haven Community Redevelopment Agency (CRA) FY 2024 Annual Report is for the period beginning October 1, 2023 through September 30, 2024. In this report is the FY 2024 Financial Statements, a map of the CRA areas, accomplishments of the CRA. We cover two districts: Downtown and Florence Villa. We are continuously working to transform blighted areas in our community and are dedicated to revitalizing and redeveloping both areas into thriving districts that are sought out by both businesses and residents.

We are very pleased to report on the activities and progress of the Winter Haven Community Redevelopment Agency (CRA) for FY 2023-2024. The purpose of the CRA is to eliminate blight and enhance our tax base, while encouraging economic growth and development. Our CRA plans establish the framework by which the community, staff, advisory committees, and CRA Board work to improve the quality of life within our District.

We look forward to continuing the progress of the Winter Haven CRA as we implement our plans and facilitate positive change.

Brian Yates
CRA Board Chairman

Eric Labbe
Economic Opportunity and
Community Investment Director

ABOUT THE COMMUNITY REDEVELOPMENT AGENCY

Background

The Winter Haven Community Redevelopment Agency (CRA) is governed by a seven-member Board and receives input from an advisory committee for each district.

CRA Board

Brian Yates - *Chair*

L. Tracy Mercer - *Vice Chair*

Clifton Dollison

Dr. James B. Threlkel

Nathaniel Birdsong Jr.

Vacant

Brad Dantzler

DOWNTOWN ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Robert Sammons - Chair

Julie Sands – Vice Chair

Christopher M. Collany

Cyndi Threlkeld

Rick Renardson

Steve Kalogridis

Dave Dershimer

Jessie Skubna

Panagiotis Iakovidis

Chris Sexson

FLORENCE VILLA ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Joe Halman– Chair

Kamesha Williams – Vice Chair

Betty Smothers

Derrick Baker

Kendra Williams

Melodie Stevenson

Vacant

Deldrick Leonard

Joey Hilliard

JaQuis McCullough

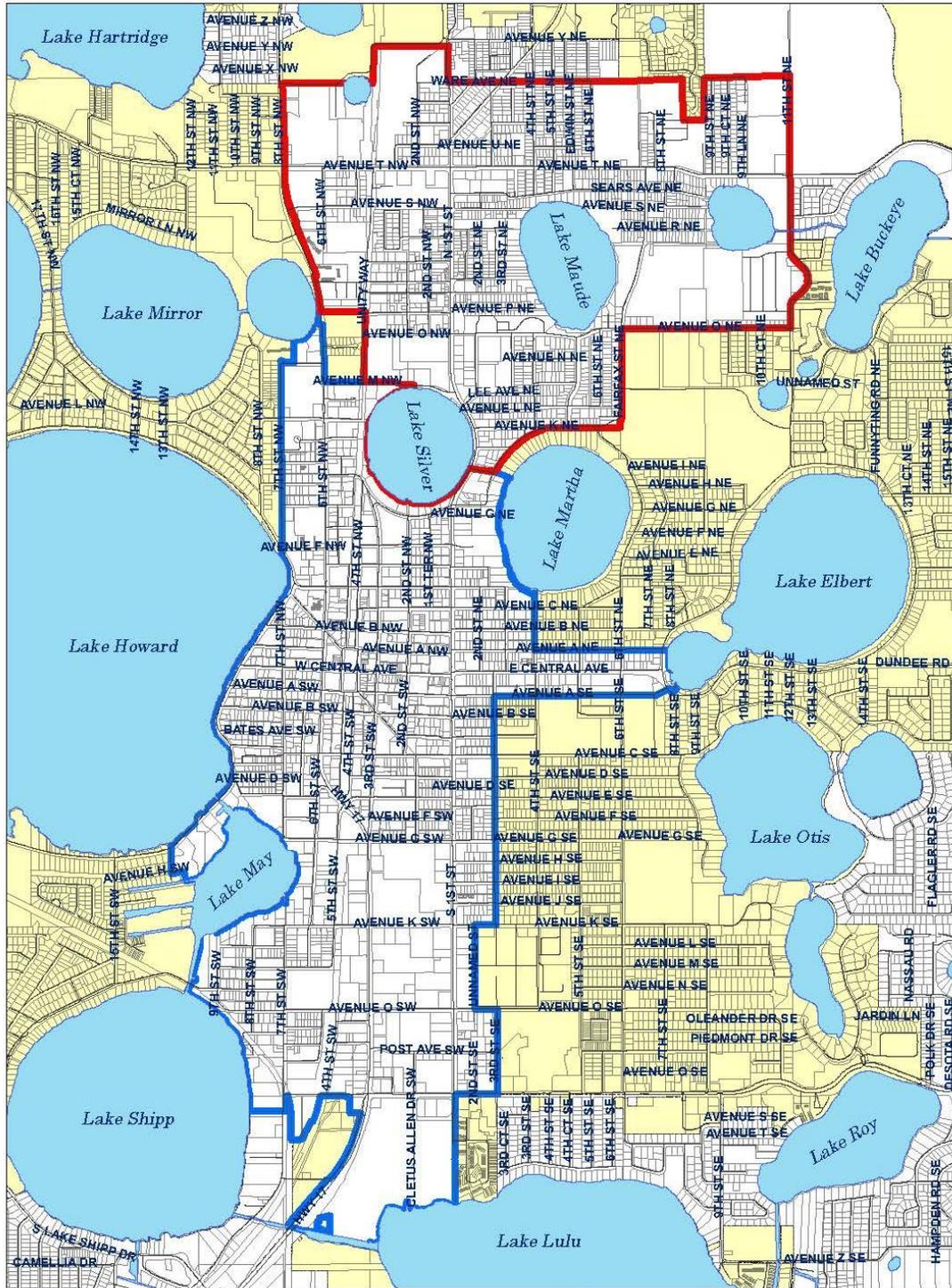
What is a CRA (Who We Are)

Established on March 13, 2000 and created by Resolution R-00-05 (Downtown) and Resolution R-00-06 (Florence Villa), the Winter Haven Community Redevelopment Agency fosters and promotes community redevelopment activities in two designated areas: Downtown and Florence Villa. A CRA is a “special district” under Florida law that encourages redevelopment and the elimination of blight within the district. Activities of the Winter Haven CRA are detailed in plans tailored for each area which include:

- Infrastructure improvements
- Streetscaping or beautification
- Affordable housing
- Recreation and park facility improvements
- Economic development
- Transportation improvement
- Neighborhood enhancement

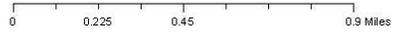
The CRA is primarily funded through Tax Increment Financing (TIF), a process of capturing property tax revenues that would normally go to Polk County and the City. TIF funds are deposited into a Redevelopment Trust Fund that can then be spent on specific projects or used to leverage additional financing for larger projects.

CRA Boundary Map



CITY LIMITS
 PARCEL
 FLORENCE VILLA
 DOWNTOWN
 ▲ NORTH

The map is created from a subset of data from the City of Winchester Geospatial Information System (GIS) database. The City of Winchester makes no claim, no representation, and no warranty, express or implied, concerning the utility, accuracy, or timeliness of the data. The City of Winchester is not responsible for any errors or omissions in the data. The City of Winchester is not responsible for any errors or omissions in the data. The City of Winchester is not responsible for any errors or omissions in the data. Map produced by James Henderson, Director, Planning & Economic Development.



Integrity/Respect • Financial Stewardship • Inclusive • Visionary • Exceptional Service

CRA FINANCIALS

The primary funding source for the Winter Haven Community Redevelopment Agency (CRA) is Tax Increment Financing (TIF). TIF revenues are calculated based on the Polk County Property Appraiser’s Office Redevelopment Reports that determine the taxable value of the CRA districts.

CRA REVENUES

	City TIF	County TIF	Interest/ Misc	Carry Forward	TOTAL
Downtown	\$1,594,208	\$1,617,239	\$155,639	\$2,418,221	\$5,785,307
Florence Villa	\$549,102	\$557,034	\$98,948	\$1,139,896	\$2,344,980

CRA EXPENSES

	Administrative	Operations	Capital Projects	Grants/ Economic Development	Debt	TOTAL
Downtown	\$201,355	\$134,188	\$1,660,782	\$503,186	\$1,000,849	\$3,500,360
Florence Villa	\$98,979	\$28,878	\$150,000	\$53,700	\$8,295	\$339,852

OTHER FINANCIALS

	Base Year Values*	FY 2024 Values	Affordable Housing Expenses	Ending Fund Balance
Downtown	\$171,310,567	\$425,956,117	\$10,000	\$1,260,911
Florence Villa	\$39,596,809	\$127,305,709	\$42,510	\$1,740,959

*Base year 2000

CRA Development Agreement Types

The Downtown CRA currently has fourteen (14) developer agreements for tax incentive reimbursements and one within the Florence Villa CRA district.

Grants/Incentive Programs

- **Residential Improvement Grants**

This grant provides property owners a maximum of \$10,000 to make exterior improvements to their homes. Eligible work includes: repair or replacement of eaves, fascia board, gutters and downspouts; scraping and painting or other protective covering repairs; screen repairs, landscaping, window repair and replacement, damaged wood replacement, fence repairs and front door enhancement or replacement.

- **Commercial Façade Grants**

This program provides non-residential and multi-family property owners to make exterior improvements with a maximum of \$10,000 (no matching funds required in the Florence Villa District). The Downtown District requires a 50% match of the project costs up to a maximum amount of \$5,000.

- **Housing Investment Program (HIP)**

This program provides for \$10,000 per unit in tax increment refunds, following completion of the project.

Smart City Bonus: Both A. and B. above could also receive \$1,500 per unit grant upon completion of construction when the project includes three or more approved Smart City technologies as provided by the Smart City Advisory or City Staff.

- **Outdoor Café Furniture Grant**

This grant is designed to help with recovery of Downtown restaurant businesses, improve the economic vitality and vibrancy of the community, encourage safe distancing measures as may be needed from time-to-time, and to compliment the recently budgeted design and construction of new outdoor café space. The Outdoor Café Furniture Grant Program enables qualified property owners or restaurant tenants to furnish approved outdoor, side-yard, or sidewalk café areas, within the C-1 (Downtown) Zoning District, with outdoor furniture consistent with the ‘brand’ of downtown Winter Haven by making available one-time grants of up to 90% of outdoor furniture cost, up to \$6,000, for purchase and installation of approved outdoor dining furniture.

- **Real Estate Development Accelerator (REDA)** This incentive provides for up to 60% Tax Increment Financing for projects of \$5 million or more.
- **Real Estate Development Accelerator II (REDA II)**
This incentive is for large-scale development projects that enhance the economic diversity of the CRA and are anticipated to increase the ad valorem Taxable Value of the subject site by **\$15 million or more**. This incentive can be utilized in the form of land mark-down (if city-owned land is needed), infrastructure improvements, Tax Increment Financing rebates, water/sewer fees or similar types of assistance. Each project to be negotiated on an individual basis with city staff, based on an evidenced economic gap in a development pro forma. Incentive typically to be paid as a reimbursement to the developer. Incentives to pay for water, wastewater, and similar fees may be internally transferred from the CRA to the City as appropriate to offset certain expenses prior to construction. Annual incentive reimbursement payments to the developer not to exceed **90%** of the actual tax increment from the project.
- **Local Infrastructure Gap**
This incentive is designed to reimburse developers of new or existing buildings (rehabilitations of more than 50% of assessed value) within the Community Redevelopment Area (CRA) where city development code may require an off-site sidewalk connection in order to achieve a residential density bonus. Funding is available annually on a first come, first serve basis. The application includes all guidelines for reimbursement.
- **Façade and Exterior Improvement Program**
This program provides for reimbursement of 50% of a facade, not to exceed \$15,000, or up to \$25,000 in a targeted area.
- **Commercial Redevelopment**
This incentive provides for up to 50% Tax Increment Financing rebate for redevelopment projects that will increase the taxable value by at least 100%.
- **Capital Improvement Grant Program**
This program provides up to 50% of the previous year's interest only portion of a loan obtained for rehabilitation or renovation of a building.

Projects

Downtown			
Project	Status	Expenditure	Goal
Joyce B Davis Park	Completed	\$2,164,056	3, 5
Sidewalk Cafés	Completed		1
DOT Pond Beautification	In Progress	\$6,427	5
Avenue C SW Lighting	In Progress	\$10,215	3
Wayfinding Signage	In Progress	\$39,000	3
Lake Silver Skate Park Pavilion Repurposing	In Progress	\$15,879	5
Parking Garage Cameras	Completed	\$29,400	5
Grants	In Progress	\$136,156	1, 3, 4, 6
TOTAL		\$2,401,133	

Florence Villa			
Project	Status	Expenditure	Goal
Lightning Alert Siren	Installed	\$0	4
Reuben Williams Sports Complex Crosswalks	Complete	\$150,000	5
Grants	In Progress	\$42,510	1, 2
TOTAL		\$192,510	

Summary of Goals Accomplished in FY 2024

Downtown

In FY 2024, work towards meeting the following goals contained in the Downtown CRA Plan occurred:

- **Goal 1: Enhance Economic Development by Supporting Existing Business and Attracting New Investment to the Downtown District –**
 - The first hotel to be built in Downtown Winter Haven opened in November of 2023, with the CRA working with the developers to reimburse the water and wastewater connection fees through our Economic Development. This hotel brought more than 20 jobs to the downtown district in addition to providing much needed hotel rooms for visitors who attend events and eat in our downtown during their visits.
 - Payments made pursuant to TIF rebate programs to support existing businesses and attract new business by increasing the population in downtown through the construction of new multi-family housing and encourage large scale commercial investment such as Bond Clinic (First Street North) and Physicians Partnership. Additionally, The CRA has invested in a number of preventative measures including facade grants, facility improvements, gateway signage, and an ongoing sidewalk café project. All of which encourage vibrancy in the district and prevent future blighted conditions. Continued support for the Ritz Theatre and Main Street Winter Haven also supports this goal.
- **Goal 3: Expand Neighborhood Development and Revitalization Efforts –**
 - Continuing our efforts to advance complete streets concepts and principles that will enhance lighting, safety, parking availability, walkability, and aesthetic appearance throughout the District the CRA funded the design of street lighting in an area that is redeveloping as a residential part of the district. A new apartment complex with over 100 units opened and the street lighting enhances the walkability and safety as these new downtown residents walk to their destinations supporting out downtown retail and restaurant businesses.

- **Goal 5: Enhance Pedestrian Access, Community Programs, and Parks and Recreation –**

- The CRA funded the design of the Joyce B. Davis Park and the start of construction was completed creating a vital park and improved safety for pedestrians with a raised crosswalk including enhanced landscaping in a wider median for additional traffic calming.
- A pavilion adjacent to the Chain of Lakes Trail was in need of improvements. The CRA budgeted for this to be torn down to repurpose the site along the trail. The repurposing continues into the next fiscal year.
- Florida Department of Transportation has a large storm water retention pond located in the Downtown adjacent to two large commercial properties. The CRA funded a Master Plan for enhancing the pond and was the top ranked grant submitted to FDOT for the Beautification Grant. The Master Plan was started and continued into next fiscal year. Funds were budgeted to begin construction and carried forward into FY2025.

Florence Villa

In FY 2024, work towards meeting the following goals contained in the Florence Villa CRA Plan occurred:

- **Goal 1: Attract Business and Economic Development Opportunities**

- \$8,295 was transferred to the Dark Fiber Fund to facilitate the expansion of broadband facilities and WiFi access in Florence Villa for improved access to the lower income families in this area.
- The CRA continues to facilitate Commercial development through the Commercial Facade Grant.

- **Goal 2: Improve Housing Conditions and Increase Affordable Housing Stock –**

- \$42,510 was expended for residential improvement grants to remove blight and improve housing conditions. The CRA has increased the maximum of the Residential Improvement Grant from \$5,000 to \$10,000 and to speed up the approval process has implemented a list of staff level improvements.

- **Goal 4: Reduce Crime and Create as Safer Living Environment –**
 - The CRA funded the purchase and installation of a lightning alert system and siren for the Reuben Williams Sports Complex.
 - Two raised crosswalks were installed in Phase 2 of the Reuben Williams Sports Complex construction to enhance the safety of pedestrians coming and going from the complex.
- **Goal 5: Improve Community Programs, Parks and Recreation –**
 - The Winter Haven Recreation and Cultural Center is an on-going City project in Florence Villa that the CRA Advisory Committee and community continue engagement on.

Annual Audit Report

The FY 2024 audit reports for the Downtown and Florence Villa CRA Districts are not fully available as of March 31, 2025. Upon their completion, the audit reports will be published to the City’s website, www.mywinterhaven.com, within 45 days.

Closing Note

In FY 2024 the Winter Haven CRA brought on staff members in two full-time positions and began a strong campaign to spread the word about the grants, especially the residential improvement grants in the Florence Villa district. We have over \$200,000 of approved work waiting to be done. Staff is working to revise the process to move the work along quicker.

Between the two districts we have started nine (9) projects with four (4) of them being completed. For a staff of two with just over nine (9) months’ time great things have been accomplished in just a short while. We have a strong team with great working relationships with other city departments and community partners. The City of Winter Haven is a great example of what CRA dollars can do to revitalize an area and spur growth in the City. We have lots of redevelopment still to come and I look forward to making a difference in the community where I live and work!

Angie Hibbard

CRA Manager