

*W*INTER HAVEN

THE CHAIN OF LAKES CITY

**Winter Haven
Community
Redevelopment
Agency**

**Goals, Policies, and
Performance Standards
Report**

December 2026

WINTER HAVEN

THE CHAIN OF LAKES CITY

ABOUT THE WINTER HAVEN COMMUNITY REDEVELOPMENT AGENCY

Background

The Winter Haven Community Redevelopment Agency (CRA) was established in 2000 and is governed by a seven-member Board and receives input from an advisory committee for each district comprised of ten (10) members.

CRA Board

Brian Yates - *Chair*

L. Tracy Mercer - *Vice Chair*

Clifton Dollison

Dr. James B. Threlkel

Nathaniel Birdsong Jr.

Maxie Hunter

Brad Dantzler

DOWNTOWN ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Julie Sands - Chair

Robert Sammons – Vice Chair

Christopher M. Collany

Cyndi Threlkeld

Rick Renardson

Steve Kalogridis

Dave Dershimer

Jessie Skubna

Panogiotis Iakovidis

Chris Sexson

FLORENCE VILLA ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Joe Halman – Chair

Kamesha Williams – Vice Chair

Betty Smothers

Derrick Baker

Kendra Williams

Melodie Stevenson

Cecilia Leonard

Deldrick Leonard

Joey Hilliard

Vacant

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:

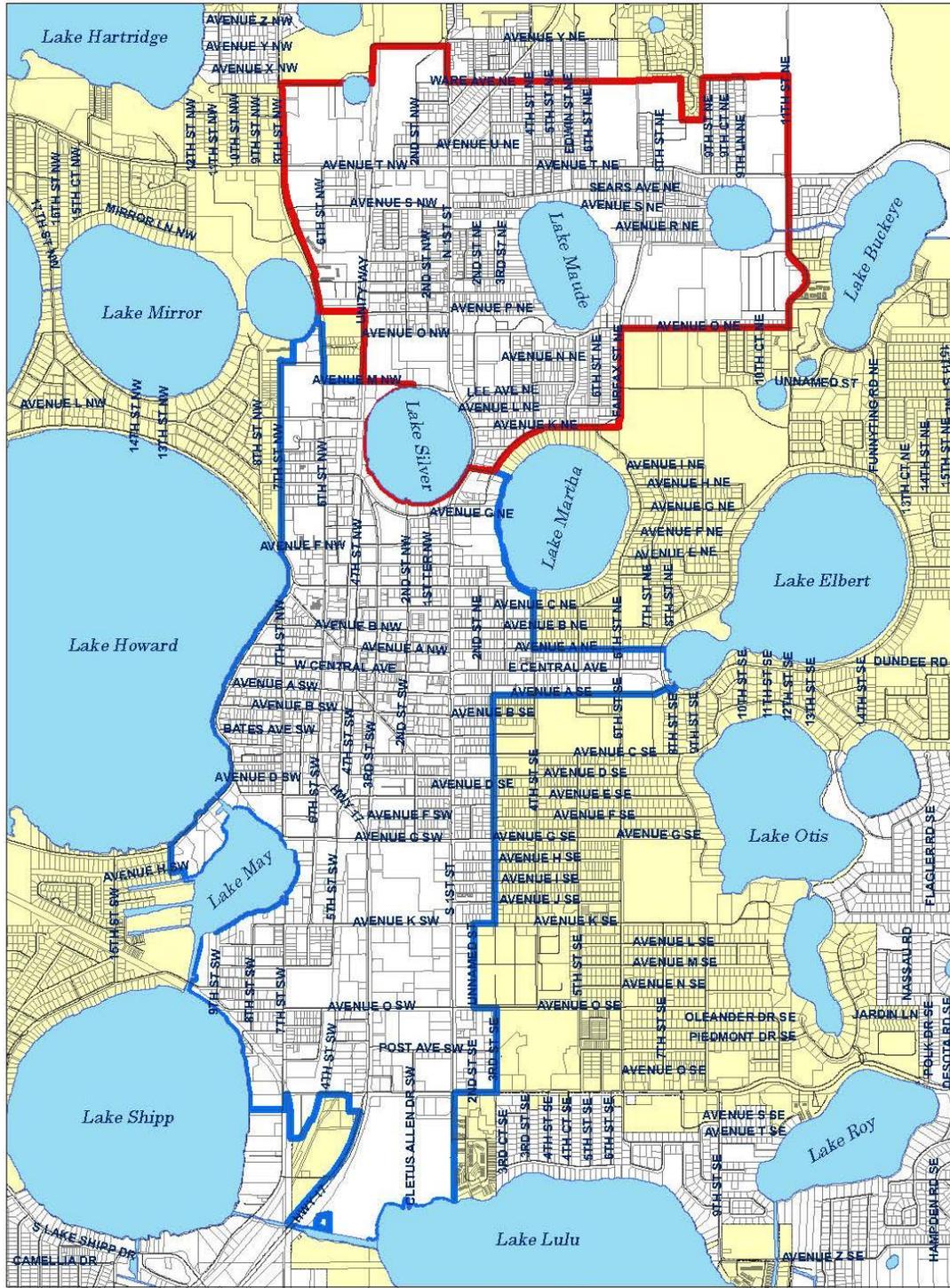
- Infrastructure improvements
- Streetscaping or beautification
- Affordable housing
- Recreation and park facility improvements
- Economic development
- Transportation improvement
- Neighborhood enhancement

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.

FY25 at a Glance

Residential Properties Improved:	27
Grants Awarded (Commercial & Residential):	\$366,845
Capital Project Expenditures:	\$950,023
Economic Development/ TIF Reimbursed:	\$486,459

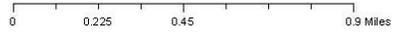
CRA Boundary Map



CITY LIMITS
 PARCEL
 FLORENCE VILLA
 DOWNTOWN

 ▲ NORTH

The map is created from a subset of data from the City of Wilmer's Open Geographic Information System (OGIS) database. The City of Wilmer Research makes no claims, no representations, and no warranties, express or implied, concerning the utility, accuracy or timeliness, the reliability or the accuracy of the OGIS database or data products generated by the City, including the digital utility or any other of such data. Map produced by James Henderson, Director, Planning & CRA, Public Manager.



Florence Villa Goals, Objectives and Performance Measurements

The following are goals, objectives and performance measurements of the CRA for FY 2025.

Goal 1: Attract business and economic development opportunities.

Objectives

- Modify land use policies to better allow for redevelopment.
 - *Measurement: Working with Planning Manager to see what is allowed for modification of the Code per the Florida Statutes*
- Develop cost-sharing policies for infrastructure improvements.
 - *Measurements: Funds have been budgeted for utility improvements and are designated through a Developer's Agreement*
- Develop criteria to identify and support catalyst site developments.
 - *Measurement: Working with the acquisition company to identify vacant parcel owners willing and able to sell to assemble land*
- Support job training, education, and business development programs.
 - *Measurement: Offering the Retail Strategies Small Business Development program and associated grant*
- Support land parcel assembly, code enforcement, and demolition for potential redevelopment.
 - *Measurement: Working with an acquisition company, they have contacted owners and are presenting a recommendation for offers*
- Provide incentives for business retention and recruitment for businesses along Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard and First Street.
 - *Measurement: New program created for new construction for business with added incentives for businesses choosing First Street in this district*
- Continue to Consider and seek ways to implement the First Street North Corridor Study.
 - *Measurement: CRA and Planning are working with a consultant*
- Develop a loan pool to support investment opportunities.
 - *Measurement: Heat for Winter Haven is developing a CDFI that will do this*
- Expand Broadband throughout the CRA.
 - *Measurement: Working with Technology Services Department to identify ways to proceed with this*
- Apply for New Market Tax Credit program.
 - *Measurement: Have not applied*
 - *Explanation: Staff has not developed a plan*
- Identify mixed use development opportunities along the First Street corridor.
 - *Measurement: Working on land assembly for development*

- The CRA, Florence Villa Community Development Corporation, churches, and civic leaders should work together to develop the organizational framework and institutional relationships to facilitate effective redevelopment activities.
 - *Measurement: Participated in a church Heritage Day and presented about our grant programs, presented at the Neighborhood Service Center and have two members on our Advisory Committee from the Community Development Corporation*

Goal 2: Improve housing conditions and increase affordable housing stock.

Objectives

- Continue to identify and remove dilapidated housing structures that pose a threat to public health and safety.
 - *Measurement: No structures identified or removed*
 - *Explanation: Have talked with Code Enforcement about structures but none are in this CRA district*
- Continue infill housing development projects.
 - *Measurement: No new projects were identified*
 - *Explanation: Met with two developers with Housing Manager but nothing further than the initial one or two conversations at this time*
- Work with City and Code enforcement through more of a “helping hands” rather than disciplinary program.
 - *Measurement: Safe Neighborhoods quarterly walks focused on two neighborhoods in this District*
- Partner with private developers to apply for Low-Income Housing Tax Credit projects.
 - *Measurement: Work closely with the Affordable Housing Manager*
- Increase residents’ and businesses’ pride and responsibility in the CRA neighborhoods.
 - *Measurement: Promoting the residential improvement and commercial façade grant programs heavier and getting more participation.*
- Increase quality and quantity of middle-income housing.
 - *Measurement: Developed new Missing Middle Rental New Construction Grant Program*
- Implement home repair assistance programs.
 - *Measurement: Modified the residential improvement grant so that work could be performed by the city’s contractors under our continuing services agreement and not just as a reimbursement where the owners pay*

Goal 3: Embrace Florence Villas African American History, Culture and Education.

Objectives

- Support development of culture, art and education facilities.
 - *Measurement: Have included several history and culture projects as part of the new Winter Haven Recreation and Cultural Center*
- Encourage Partnerships to leverage local assets including private and public resources as part of an economic development initiative to build facilities and sponsor programs.
 - *Measurement: Heart for Winter Haven is securing funding for low-cost loans and establishing a CDFI, we stay in contact about status*

Goal 4: Reduce crime and create a safer living environment.

Objectives

- Continue to encourage coordination between the Winter Haven and Polk County Police Departments.
 - *Measurement: New Police Chief was hired from Sheriff's office and has a great relationship with them still*
- Establish neighborhood policing efforts in the community.
 - *Measurement: Included police in the Engage & Evolve Meetings*
- Continue code enforcement program.
 - *Measurement: CRA staff participate in Safe Neighborhoods quarterly walks*

Goal 5: Improve Community Programs, Parks and Recreation.

Objectives

- Work to offer fee waivers for after school programs for qualified applicants. Continue to provide programs on weekends and breaks from school.
 - *Measurement: No new programs were added*
 - *Explanation: Parks and Recreation will add new programs with the opening of the new Winter Haven Recreation and Cultural Center*
- Continue installing sidewalks to connect residences to and schools and parks.
 - *Measurement: Sidewalk project on Avenue P NW and Sears Avenue NE are bid and ready for PO in early FY26*
- Improve the Winter Haven Recreation and Cultural Center.
 - *Measurement: Construction of the building is near completion in spring of 2026*
- Work to improve stormwater treatment facilities through low impact design.
 - *Measurement: Improvements were made with construction of the new Winter Haven Recreation and Cultural Center Project*

Downtown Goals, Objectives and Performance Measurements

The following are goals, objectives and performance measurements of the CRA for FY 2025.

Goal 1: Enhance Economic Development by Supporting Existing Businesses and Attracting New Investment to the Downtown District

Objectives

- Build an entrepreneurial ecosystem and collaboration space through a business incubator
 - *Measurement: Have not started building the ecosystem and collaboration*
 - *Explanation: No business incubator started*
- Enhance economic development by supporting businesses (existing and future) with access to additional parking
 - *Measurement: Completed wayfinding signage Master Plan assisting in clearly identifying parking lots*
- Expand the economic base of the district retaining existing jobs while creating new diverse employment opportunities
 - *Measurement: Worked with developers and landlords on TIF and Façade Grants*
- Develop a business attraction strategy to encourage the creation of a well-curated mix of restaurants, boutiques, and vendors
 - *Measurement: Created a new grant program in connection with Retail Strategies Small Business Program*
- Leverage relationships with large scale community employers to create employment opportunities for youths aged 18-25 that reside in the District
 - *Measurement: No new employment opportunities for youths*
 - *Explanation: Have not identified specific youth population in the District*
- Encourage proactive engagement with the development community to realize the City's community vision (more walkable, bikeable and visually appealing)
 - *Measurement: Started Engage & Evolve Meetings with businesses in the District and held joint Open House with Main Street Winter Haven*
- Initiate programs to improve and strengthen existing businesses, including marketing and promotion, small business loans and other financial incentives.
 - *Measurement: Offer pathway learnings through Retail Strategies Small Business Program*
- Create investment opportunities that will increase the tax base thereby generating additional revenues to finance actions that support public goals.
 - *Measurement: One new Developer's Agreement was signed for redevelopment of a substantial structure in the center of Downtown*

Goal: 2 Formulate Economic Development Strategies That Take Advantage of Existing and Proposed Government Projects and Programs

Objectives

- Develop economic incentives and strategies for industry relocation
 - *Measurement: Working with the Winter Haven Economic Development Council on evaluating our Incentives*
- Capitalize on Winter Haven's identity as a regional medical service provider to attract new businesses and create jobs
 - *Measurement: Working with the Winter Haven Economic Development Council on evaluating our Incentives*
- Work closely with area businesses, the Main Street Board and Chamber of Commerce to address the needs of existing businesses through the redevelopment process
 - *Measurement: Meet with Main Street Staff monthly and are non-voting members of their Board*
- Form a partnership with higher education institutions to establish educational and training programs that strengthen the capabilities of the local labor force
 - *Measurement: No new educational or training programs established*
 - *Explanation: CareerSource Polk fills this need and will coordinate with them*
- Capitalize on development and redevelopment opportunities associated with the Chain of Lakes
 - *Measurement: Participated in Charette for Lions Park*
- Work toward the relocation of industrial uses away from present locations to provide redevelopment opportunities, while being sensitive to the needs of the industrial and manufacturing users
 - *Measurement: Working with the Winter Haven Economic Development Council on evaluating our Incentives*

Goal 3: Expand Neighborhood Development and Revitalization Efforts

Objectives

- Proactively survey the Downtown District for code enforcement violations
 - *Measurement: Work closely with Code Enforcement and Safe Neighborhoods staff to assist when needed*
- Develop a public education and promotion campaign regarding downtown parking
 - *Measurement: Completed Downtown Wayfinding Master Plan*
- Enhance the Districts ability to host more programmed events in the Downtown area
 - *Measurement: Created Engage & Evolve Meeting with businesses. City purchased the Ritz theatre and we will continue to work to host programs there*
- Continue to create safe pedestrian connections while enhancing the walkability of the Downtown District
 - *Measurement: Working with Public Works Director to enhance crossing at Avenue C SW and 4th Street SW as part of FDOT Pond Beautification. This project has two additional crosswalks being*

installed as well. Addition of 6 solar street lights in two parks for additional lighting in the park and adjacent parking

- Heighten community marketability and foster sense of place by investing in wayfinding signage and streetscaping improvements
 - *Measurement: Completed Master Plan for Wayfinding and Signage*
- Continue to advance complete streets concepts and principals, enhancing lighting, safety and aesthetic appearance throughout the District
 - *Measurement: Added six (6) solar lights to two parks illuminating the park, trail and parking lots.*
- Seek opportunities for land assembly at appropriate locations to support future development
 - *Measurement: No land assembled*
 - *No areas identified as appropriate – developers are doing this on their own*
- Encourage mixed-use development at an appropriate scale in the downtown
 - *Measurement: Developer’s Agreement was approved on a specific project but was not executed by the developer when a partner withdrew*
- Introduce multi-family development in close proximity to the historic downtown strengthening the local market for retail and services.
 - *Measurement: Construction of a new apartment complex was completed in conjunction with our REDA Grant (TIF based).*

Goal 4: Encourage Private Home Ownership, and Develop and Market Housing Opportunities Within the Redevelopment Area

Objectives

- Continue to evaluate innovative strategies designed to increase housing supply and affordability
 - *Measurement: No new strategies identified*
 - *Explanation: We have a new Housing Manager that works on this and will work together*
- Build on residential housing demand. Include a diversity of housing types that serve a diverse range of life phases (i.e., seniors and young people)
 - *Measurement: No new residential projects*
 - *Explanation: Several projects were started in the previous years but are now complete*
- Continue to identify underutilized parcels for redevelopment opportunities within the Downtown District
 - *Measurement: No new parcels identified*
 - *Explanation: Developers and private individuals are identifying the parcels and discussing ideas for development with the CRA*
- Identify and market areas where private interests can develop housing and necessary support facilities in the redevelopment area and adjacent neighborhoods
 - *Measurement: Held a workshop with Downtown CRA Advisory Committee and identified an area just across Highway 17 to focus on in FY26*
- Encourage private efforts toward building housing in the redevelopment area and adjacent neighborhoods
 - *Measurement: A Developer’s Agreement was signed for a new apartment or condo building*

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

Objectives

- Identify opportunities for more senior and youth focused recreational programming
 - *Measurement: No opportunities identified*
 - *Explanation: Parks, Recreation and Culture focuses on this and will include us in the conversations*
- Support proposed road improvements that enable rerouting of unnecessary truck traffic from the downtown
 - *Measurement: Truck traffic was rerouted off of Central in 2023, with no new rerouting planned since*
 - *Explanation: Public Works Department works closely with a traffic engineer to identify these possibilities*
- Create a safe, secure, appealing and efficient pedestrian system linking all major activity centers, parking facilities and other interchange points
 - *Measurement: Added six (6) solar lights to two parks illuminating the park, trail and parking lots*
- Integrate the trail system with the lake system to provide greater access to Winter Haven's lakes and increase recreational opportunities for residents and visitors
 - *Measurement: No new integration*
 - *Parks, Recreation and Culture is working on an additional trail system adjacent to Lake Howard*
- Construct sidewalks and bicycle pathways through the district appropriately designed and separated from auto circulation for safety purposes to be used as positive tools to improve the area's environment through the use of landscaping and other visual treatments
 - *Measurement: Sidewalks were constructed along several new development projects*

Goal 6: Re-Establish Old Neighborhoods Through Redevelopment and Revitalization of Housing Stock

Objectives

- Work with the City to clean-up vacant unattended properties
 - *Measurement: Identified property and working with Code Enforcement and the owner for a demolition*
- Explore opportunity to expand residential improvement programming to include additional structural and or building issues
 - *Measurement: Held a workshop with the Downtown CRA Advisory Committee and discussed some additional residential grant opportunities*
- Initiate in-fill housing development projects on existing and newly vacated properties
 - *Measurement: No vacated properties identified*
 - *Explanation: Developers are identifying the properties and initiating the projects*
- Identify and restore historic housing that may be in a state of deterioration but otherwise is structurally sound

- *Measurement: No historic housing identified*
 - *Explanation: Need to create a program or grant as the existing grant is just for the facade*
- Remove restrictions in zoning and development codes that inhibit private investment in the restoration of housing
 - *Measurement: Have not identified the restrictions we need to modify*
 - *Explanation: Legislature has restricted many changes to Code and as such we continue to work closely with the Planning Manager for allowable updates*

Goal 7: Continue to Advance Smart City opportunities, Strategies, and Partnerships

Objectives

- Assess feasibility of advancing public electric vehicle (EV) charging infrastructure
 - *Measurement: No new charging infrastructure*
 - *Explanation: Added four stations in two locations and we monitor use, we work with new development for addition of charging stations for their residents*
- Adopt best practices for enhancing connectivity, security, and the stewardship of assets and data
 - *Measurement: Work closely with our IT Department*
- Continue to advance community connections through the expansion of underground fiber optic conduit
 - *Measurement: Work closely with our It Department to coordinate this will new construction projects to add the conduit*
- Assess opportunities for improvements and enhancements of broadband infrastructure, and the expansion of infrastructure to underserved areas
 - *Measurement: No new improvements*
 - *Explanation: Need to identify underserved areas within this district*
- Advance innovation projects that deliver community benefit, including projects that optimize resources and improve service delivery
 - *Measurement: No current projects*
 - *Explanation: Need to coordinate with It Department to identify projects*
- Work with all appropriate government and private utilities to ensure the provision of adequate services including, electricity, telecommunications, cable television, water, stormwater, sanitary sewer, gas, and solid waste
 - *Measurement: No current projects*
 - *Explanation: Need to coordinate with utility departments and companies to identify any areas that need improved services*
- Secure grant funding, when possible, to leverage tax increment revenues to accomplish stated goals related to the provision of adequate infrastructure
 - *Measurement: No grants identified*
 - *Explanation: Water Department and Public Works work to identify grants for improvements*

Goal 8: Encourage Innovation in Land Planning and Site Development Techniques

Objectives

- When undertaking streetscape improvements, new private construction and building rehabilitation, place utility lines underground where it is feasible to improve visual qualities
 - *Measurement: Undergrounding TECO lines along 3rd Street SW*
- Develop architectural design standards for building renovations, façade improvements and new construction to ensure that future development maintains the historic character of Winter Haven
 - *Measurement: No standards have been developed*
 - Explanation: Main Street Winter Haven assist with façade improvements and we will work together in FY26 to develop design standards as allowable by the Code and the State Legislature
- Prepare landscaping, streetscaping and lighting plans for public spaces to improve the appearance of the redevelopment area and provide for irrigation and maintenance of proposed improvements
 - *Measurement: Landscaping improvements in Central Park mid-summer*
- Discourage office and commercial uses in surrounding neighborhoods and direct these uses to more appropriate locations downtown to develop the critical mass necessary to support new and existing businesses
 - *Measurement: Work withing our existing zoning for businesses and neighborhoods*
- Consolidate government uses in the downtown to provide synergy for commerce and development opportunities for the private sector on previously owned public land, thereby strengthening the tax base
 - *Measurement: Government uses are consolidated to the area at the intersection of 3rd Street NW and Avenue E NW*

The Winter Haven CRA remains committed to redeveloping our community and making lasting improvements. We strive to meet our goals and will continue to make progress in 2026. Transparent reporting and commitment to measurable outcomes will assist in continuing Winter Haven’s strength as a community and making it possible for our city to flourish economically. This report measures the progress and assists in making clear steps to meeting our Goals for each CRA District.



Angie Hibbard

CRA Manager | 863-292-8046

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