

**Community Redevelopment Area Advisory Board  
Meeting Minutes  
Thursday January 5, 2023  
9:00 AM – 4:00 PM  
Lake Crago Recreational Center**

**Attendance**

Board Members: Tyler Zimmerman, Harry Bryant, Terry Coney, Christine Goding, Chrissanne Long, Commissioner Chad McLeod, Kate Lake and Teresa O'Brien

Absent: Brandon Eady

Staff: Valerie Ferrell, Shelley Guiseppi, Carlos Turner, Jason Willey, and Brian Rewis

Guest Speakers: Katie Worthington Decker (LEDC)  
Maggie Briggs (Apiary)  
Jon Kirk (Straughn Trout)  
Blake Drury and Wes Schaffer (GAI)  
Jonathan Rodriguez (CED Neighborhood Senior Planner)  
Lt. Joe Parker and Captain Ed Cain (LPD)

**Morning Sessions**

**2022 CRA Overview, Board Training Basics and Redevelopment Plan Overviews**

Valerie Ferrell welcomed everyone. Prior to starting the Retreat presentations, she indicated she received an email from Brandon Eady indicating his resignation from the CRA Advisory Board due to a recent position he has taken. She read his note for the record and shared appreciation for Brandon's leadership and service to the CRA.

According to By-laws the Advisory Board should elect its Chair and Vice Chair at its annual meeting held in September. With the recent news of Brandon's resignation and Frank Lansford's term expiration, the Board will need to select new Officers. This can be done at the February meeting, and the appointed Officers will serve until the next annual meeting in September 2023.

Valerie proceeded to review the outline for the Retreat agenda. The meeting today is a workshop, not requiring any action to be taken, and is intended to provide information and updates on the previous year as well as several initiatives underway. The morning session will focus on Lakeland CRA governance, Redevelopment Plans and 2022 activities.

The Lakeland Community Redevelopment Agency has a CRA Board, which is the City Commission which is responsible for implementing the Redevelopment Plan for each district, as well as adopting ordinances/resolutions and approving contracts. Lakeland has one CRA Advisory Board with a total of eleven members making up representatives from each district. The Advisory Board reviews, refines, and makes recommendations for project approvals to the Commission. CRA staff implements action items and policy, while keeping projects in motion. The CRA is part of the Community and Economic Development Department, which conducts much business that touches several parts of a development project.

Redevelopment Areas and Plan Goals:

**MIDTOWN** is the largest district, anchored by the medical district, Joker Marchant Stadium and the redeveloped Mass Market assemblage by the CRA. This district includes 21 active and engaged registered residential neighborhoods. Midtown was established in 2001, with its sunset in 2031.

**Midtown Redevelopment Plan Goals:**

- Preserve & enhance neighborhoods
- Strengthen mixed-use activity centers
- Identify and beautify development corridors
- Improve open space and infrastructure

**DOWNTOWN** is the oldest district in Lakeland with its history closely linked with the Lakeland Downtown Development Authority established in 1977 where the CRA was formally established in 1979. Boundaries have expanded 4 times and an extension of the CRA was granted in 2005, with its sunset in 2035.

**Downtown Redevelopment Plan Goals:**

- Develop vision for land use and district design
- Market area and recruit partners
- Coordinate efforts of downtown groups and streamline processes
- Improve infrastructure for parking, pedestrians and traffic

**DIXIELAND** is the South Florida Avenue commercial corridor, focused on its unique collection of retail shops that serves as a gateway to Downtown. Dixieland was established in 2001, with its sunset it 2031.

**Dixieland Redevelopment Plan Goals:**

- Redevelopment administration
- Prevention of future blight
- Economic development
- Public Facilities and services
- Strategic land use activities
- Housing in redevelopment area
- Historic Preservation

**Valerie reviewed CRA activities from 2022:**

- 52 incentives awarded totaling \$2,229,807
- Public enhancements totaled \$1,298,126
- The CRA Advisory Board reviewed 4 Tax Increment Financing (TIF) Agreement requests, 3 strategic acquisitions, 3 CRA tenant lease requests, 4 incentive requests (above administrative limits) and 9 other business items.
- Property Value growth for each district in comparison to building permits issued, as well as property tax revenues
- TIF Agreement reimbursements are estimated to be \$907,000 in FY 23

Valerie then reviewed the impact of TIF Agreements. There are 17 active agreements within Downtown CRA. Although Midtown CRA offers the incentive as well, there are no active agreements at this time. The TIF impacts of projects yet to be completed are estimated to significantly hinder the ability of Downtown's budget to incentivize other projects. She reminded the board of the Redevelopment Plan goals for Downtown, and how the CRA can set a standard for TIF Agreements as well as be creative with how it incentivizes projects with infrastructure assistance (i.e. utilities, roads and sidewalk enhancements, etc).

There was Board discussion regarding the ability to set a standard for TIF Agreements, receiving project background information prior to hearing the request, as well as understanding the infrastructure assistance component for each project. It was noted that staff can provide further detail to the Advisory Board in an effort to assist with future TIF requests.

### **Catalyst 2.0**

Valerie introduced Katie Worthington Decker, Vice President of Lakeland Economic Development Council (LEDC) and Maggie Briggs, President of the Apiary. To inform development opportunities and market the City of Lakeland to potential partners, the CRA partnered with the Lakeland Economic Development Council (“LEDC”) to build a system that would layer strategic planning outputs into an interactive digital modeling system. The LEDC initiated the platform by procuring the services of the Apiary, a Lakeland-based design firm that specializes in photorealistic architectural visualization. The first phase of the web-based digital twin will show the downtown core. Allowing for interactive engagement from the user, the platform is expected to launch for public use late January 2023. Future phases will include the deliverables consistent with strategic planning consultant timelines associated with the work currently underway in the East Main District, Downtown West, and the recently completed South Florida Avenue Master Plan.

Katie provided a live demonstration of the CatalystLakeland.com, walking through the tools and information provided in the platform. The CRA/City can add 6 additional sites to the existing platform and there is anticipation for its expansion beyond the Downtown urban core. She indicated there will be a presentation to the City Commission on January 17<sup>th</sup> revealing the platform and a request to expand the contract with the Apiary to ensure the background services are continuously optimized. She further elaborated this will constantly evolve as the Lakeland community evolves, allowing for new projects to be added at the cost of the owner/architect for an approximate estimate of \$5,000 per project.

### **Afternoon Sessions**

#### **East Main**

Valerie introduced Jon Kirk with Straughn Trout Architects to review the planning efforts in East Main. East Main is prime for redevelopment, with its proximity to Downtown and many established local businesses focused on building construction and design. It offers opportunities for infill and placemaking, which is identified in the East Main Street Master Plan prepared in 2016. This plan identified land development strategies, including urban design standards for the entire area and a potential design district on Rose Street. With significant development along Lake Mirror as well as addition of Mirrorton Apartments, the connection at Rose Street under Bartow Road/US Hwy 98 is imperative to bring pedestrian accessibility into East Main. The strategic plan includes design language, public right-of-way streetscape elements, as well as district brand identity for this significant gateway connecting downtown to this new district.

#### **Downtown West**

Valerie introduced Blake Drury and Wes Schafer with GAI Consultants to review planning efforts for Downtown West. Downtown West is not an official geography within the City, however it is made up of multiple neighborhoods, three CRAs, four Sector Plan Areas and other official constructs. The City Commission requested staff develop a master plan for areas including North Lake Wire, Lake Beulah, and more generally downtown west of Florida Avenue during 2021 strategic planning sessions. This was largely in part due to the development of Bonnet Springs Park, and spurred interest in the former Florida Tile Site which will soon become Lake Wire Apartments, the redevelopment of The Ledger site, and other

redevelopment opportunities in the area. The City is now viewing Downtown West with a unified approach. The strategic master plan will include a targeted 5-year plan, with other guiding ideas that can extend beyond the 5-year horizon such as infrastructure, infill opportunities, etc. The project will also deliver an interactive website to market and track public/private investments in the Downtown West boundaries. As planning efforts continue, the final plan will include an overview of key issues and themes within the study boundaries, as well as an ArcGIS Urban model identifying potential projects planned or visioned for the areas.

**Neighborhood Programs (CED)**

Valerie introduced Jonathan Rodriguez with the Community Economic Development team. Jonathan reviewed many services provided within the Neighborhood outreach program, including assisting neighborhood associations organize and join the Neighborhood Association Coalition. The Neighborhood associations service as a civic leadership pipeline, directly leading to volunteerism on numerous municipal boards and committees. Grants are available for events as well as neighborhood signage, in addition to the advocacy built with monthly neighborhood meetings and connecting resources from City departments to service providers in response to community needs.

**Neighborhood Programs (LPD)**

Valerie introduced Lieutenant Joe Parker, as well as the new CRA officers recently recruited including Officers Mike Hammersla, Cody Vaughn, Nick Buttrey, and Ed Sanchez. She thanked former CRA officers Brent Halstead and Kevin Schuttler for their services within the CRA districts. In 2016 the CRA entered into a partnership with the Lakeland Police Department (LPD) for "Community Policing Innovation" that saw two (2) sworn members of the Department's Neighborhood Liaison Unit funded by the CRA and assigned to the three CRA Districts for enhanced community policing consistent with the goals outlined in the respective Redevelopment Plans. Lt. Parker reviewed other initiatives the LPD and Neighborhood Services Units engage with the communities as partners and advocates to focus on crime prevention which include youth engagement and leadership.

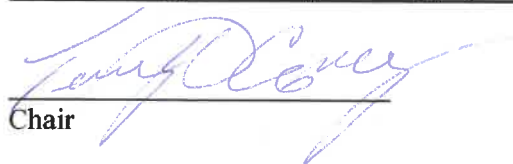
**Retreat Closing and Key Takeaways**

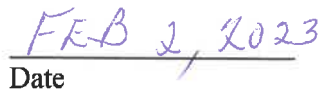
The City Commission Strategic Planning Session kicks off budget season in February. This is an opportunity to prepare ideas and goals for the FY 24 budget. Based on discussions and presentations from the retreat sessions held today, staff will gather Advisory Board input on key insights and themes for CRA consideration and continued conversation.

The next Board Retreat will be held in September.

**Adjourned at 4:15 PM**

**Next Meeting, Thursday, February 2, 2023 at 10:00 AM.**

  
Chair

  
Date