

LAKELAND CRA  
COMMUNITY REDEVELOPMENT AGENCY

2022

Resilience &  
Renewal

ANNUAL REPORT



# Welcome

Thank you for your interest in the work of the Lakeland Community Redevelopment Agency (LCRA). Lakeland's CRA was created in 1977 to address poor conditions in the city's core, through new development and private investment.

We cover three districts:  
**Downtown, Dixieland, and Midtown.**

Typically, the city uses tools like planning, regulatory changes, and new programs to support the desired growth and improvements. Funding for the CRA's work comes through Tax Incremental Revenues, or increased values and taxes for the developed properties.

Florida Law states a CRA's charge is to "address blight, rehabilitate and preserve the community redevelopment areas, reduce crime, create affordable housing, and preserve and enhance the tax base. Redevelopment activities within the CRA generate benefits that are ultimately shared with the entire community." This report provides an inside look at the benefits the LCRA is delivering to you.

The LCRA Board comprises the Lakeland City Commission and an Advisory Board with eleven members representing each district and providing public accountability. The Advisory Board reviews, refines, and makes recommendations for project approvals to the Commission. CRA staff members keep the projects in motion.



This fiscal year, the LCRA reinvested more than \$4.3 million in numerous renovation matching grants, pedestrian and transportation enhancements, affordable housing initiatives, and neighborhood investments.

Every year presents challenges, but 2022 had more than enough to test our **resilience**. From the lingering effects of COVID, through global affairs and supply chain issues, inflation, and hurricanes, the LCRA and its partners were challenged to meet agency goals. Resilience shone through, and we are proud to present this annual report, highlighting the investments made and the progress our featured partners achieved. These successes spark **renewal**, both for Lakeland properties and our continued good works.

# OUR TEAM

## Lakeland Community Redevelopment Agency Staff

**Valerie Ferrell** CRA Manager  
**Shelley Guiseppi** CRA Project Manager  
**Sandra Fairall** CRA Project Associate  
**Carlos Turner** Office Support Specialist II

## Lakeland Mayor & City Commission

**William “Bill” Mutz** Mayor  
**Stephanie Madden** Commissioner  
**Sara Roberts McCarley** Commissioner  
**Chad McLeod** Commissioner  
**Mike Musick** Commissioner  
**Bill Read** Commissioner  
**Sam Simmons** Commissioner

## City of Lakeland Staff

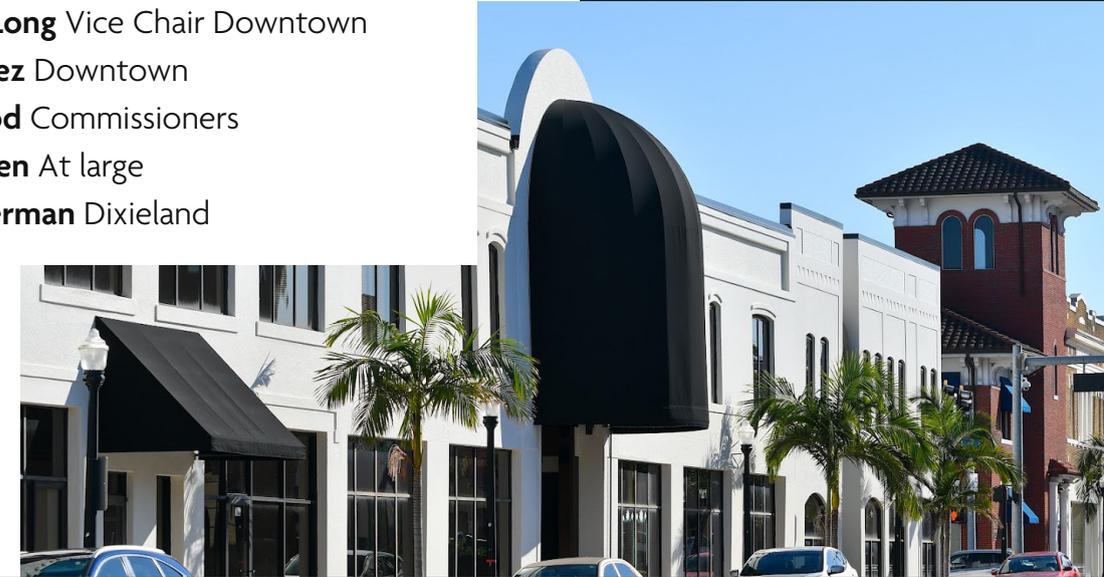
**Shawn Sherrouse** City Manager  
**Emily Colón** Deputy City Manager  
**Brian Rewis** Director of Community & Economic Development  
**Jason Willey** Assistant Director of Economic Development  
**Teresa Maio** Assistant Director of Community Development



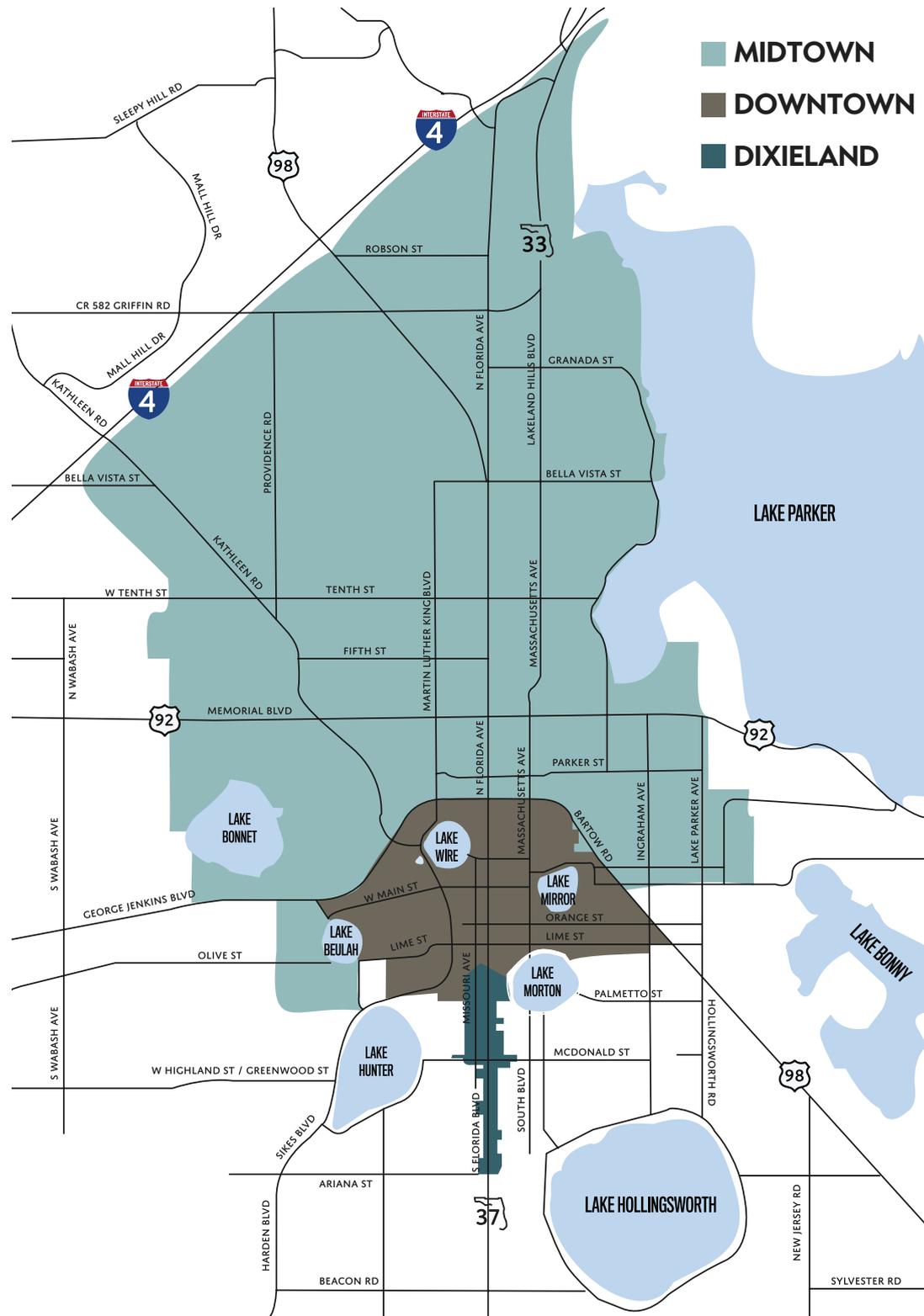
# OUR BOARD

## Lakeland Community Redevelopment Advisory Board Members

**Harry Bryant** Midtown  
**Terry Coney** Chair Midtown  
**Christine Goding** Dixieland  
**Chrissanne Long** Vice Chair Downtown  
**Katy Martinez** Downtown  
**Chad McLeod** Commissioners  
**Teresa O'Brien** At large  
**Tyler Zimmerman** Dixieland



# DISTRICT MAP



**MIDTOWN** was established in 2001. Midtown, with its 4,463 acres, is the largest of the three CRA Districts, spanning from the in-town bypass to Interstate-4. The area is anchored by the medical district, Joker Marchant Stadium, and the redeveloped Mass Market. This district includes 21 active and engaged registered residential neighborhoods.

## MID-TOWN 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.

Downtown Lakeland comprises 555 acres, with the core being a bustling center of specialty retail, dining options, and a growing arts and entertainment scene. Centered around Munn Park, the downtown redevelopment area is walkable and aesthetically pleasing because of multi-million-dollar investments in capital and streetscape improvements. With new residential growth, downtown is primed to reach its potential.

## DOWNTOWN 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** was established in 2001. Dixieland CRA is approximately 73-acres of commercial corridor with a collection of vintage retail and boutique shops. A budding restaurant and coffeehouse scene draws creatives to connect and collaborate. Dixieland is the gateway to Downtown's arts and entertainment center.

## DIXIE-LAND GOALS

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

# FINANCIALS

## MIDTOWN

### Revenues

INTEREST & MISC.  
**\$265,915.29**

RENTAL INCOME  
**\$190,369.99**

TAX INCREMENT REVENUES  
**\$5,535,129.39**

TOTAL  
**\$5,991,414.67**

### Expenses

AFFORDABLE HOUSING <b>\$203,402.45</b>	NEIGHBORHOODS <b>\$214,368.91</b>
COMMUNITY IMPROVEMENT <b>\$444,468.33</b>	OPERATING <b>\$511,722.46</b>
CORRIDOR ENHANCEMENTS <b>\$191,239.34</b>	PROPERTY ACQUISITION/ MANAGEMENT <b>\$264,730.10</b>
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT <b>\$1,600,037.65</b>	

TOTAL  
**\$3,429,969.24**

## PROPERTY VALUE INCREASES



### MIDTOWN

Base Year Value (2001)  
**\$313,768,148**

Assessed Value as of 10/5/2022  
**\$909,743,946**

### DOWNTOWN

Base Year Value (2005)  
**\$23,300,029**

Assessed Value as of 10/5/2022  
**\$113,056,865**

### DIXIELAND

Base Year Value (2001)  
**\$22,142,832**

Assessed Value as of 10/5/2022  
**\$54,658,942**

### Revenues

INTEREST & MISC.  
**\$148,976.86**

TAX INCREMENT REVENUES  
**\$2,071,240.24**

TOTAL  
**\$2,220,217.10**

### Expenses

COMMUNITY IMPROVEMENT <b>\$30,756.00</b>	ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT <b>\$810,631.05</b>
CORRIDOR ENHANCEMENTS <b>\$153,225.49</b>	OPERATING <b>\$307,166.25</b>
DEBT SERVICE <b>\$400,000.00</b>	PROPERTY ACQUISITION/ MANAGEMENT <b>\$4,225.36</b>

TOTAL  
**\$1,706,004.15**

## DOWNTOWN

**18** projects initiated

**10** in progress

**9** completed

## MIDTOWN

**36** projects initiated

**24** in progress

**12** completed

### Revenues

INTEREST & MISC.  
**\$51,960.85**

TAX INCREMENT REVENUES  
**\$322,069.35**

TOTAL  
**\$374,030.20**

### Expenses

COMMUNITY IMPROVEMENT <b>\$3,447.00</b>	ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT <b>\$255,913.97</b>
CORRIDOR ENHANCEMENTS <b>\$141,741.96</b>	OPERATING <b>\$81,194.76</b>

TOTAL  
**\$482,297.69**

## DIXIELAND

**17** projects initiated

**6** in progress

**11** completed

# MARY'S BAGEL CAFE

Denise Gilmore is proud to say she has literally built her own building and business from the ground up, on land she owns and grew up on. Her entrepreneurial dream come true is Mary's Bagel Café, named for the grandmother from whom she inherited the Midtown property. From the place she played as a child, Gilmore and husband Mark Dornsauder have created a needed business and jobs for the community.

The pandemic, supply chain issues, and inflation created some unexpected construction delays and drove costs well above the original budget. Infill Adaptive Reuse grant funding from the Lakeland CRA made it possible to bring the Café to completion. The CRA also stepped in with additional funding when it was determined an 8,184-gallon underground stormwater storage system needed to be installed beneath the parking lot, as well as drive aisle and alley construction for access on the property.

Denise is still dreaming, with ideas for the parking lot she owns behind Mary's Bagel Café. Her hope is to give back to the community that raised her and to play a role in revitalizing the Midtown area.



# GORE BUILDING

PROMO TELLS A  
BRAND'S STORY  
AND BUILDS  
BRAND ♡ LOVE



Local entrepreneurs West Point One LLC wanted to invest in downtown Lakeland and saw possibilities for the historic Gore Building, on the corner of Massachusetts Avenue and Bay Street.

The Lakeland CRA contributed matching funds through Infill Adaptive Reuse and Encouraging Development Growth and Expansion (EDGE) grants to restore the first and second floors, including an elevator. The restoration encompassed a full building remodel, preserving historic elements while replacing all safety elements, such as electrical, water/plumbing, fire sprinklers, HVAC, storefront glass, and more.

Though production and supply chain issues slowed the project, Madden Branded Goods has relocated its offices to the Gore Building. Owner and partner Greg Madden said leasing talks are in progress for three additional 1st floor retail/restaurant spaces. When the 2nd floor is complete, plans call for it to be leased as corporate residential suites.



# BISCUITS & BENEDICTS

When the owners of Dixieland's new Biscuits and Benedicts restaurant leased the property on S. Florida Avenue, they knew it had housed another successful restaurant and planned to renew that success. With support from the Lakeland CRA, they set out to refurbish and upgrade the building.

The CRA's Encouraging Development Growth and Expansion Program (EDGE) grant and Infill Adaptive Reuse grant allowed matching dollars for gutting the building, rebuilding the fireplace with original bricks, restoring wood beams, and updating the kitchen with gas and tankless water. The finishing touches were window and door awnings, set off by an original mural on the building's south side. Business Partner Troy Hambrick praised the CRA's assistance in selecting the muralist and funding the improvements through a Façade and Site Improvement Grant.

Biscuits and Benedicts opened for business in June 2022, and the owners have sought out mutually beneficial arrangements with other local, independent businesses. Restoring a valuable property plus collaboration among area merchants equals a win-win for the Lakeland CRA.





# AFFORDABLE HOUSING INITIATIVES

The City of Lakeland Affordable Housing Land Bank Program provides buildable, City and CRA- owned lots to qualified developers and builders to construct new residential units and meet the City’s affordable housing needs. The purpose is to add to the City’s housing stock, reduce the number of vacant and blighted properties, and encourage the development of new affordable housing units on infill lots throughout the city. The program is intended to address the need for quality affordable housing and contribute to neighborhood stabilization efforts.

CRA-FUNDED INITIATIVE	PROJECTS	AMOUNT AWARDED
DOWN PAYMENT ASSISTANCE	7	\$159,000
OWNER OCCUPIED REHAB	5	\$67,305
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>\$226,305</b>

## AFFORDABLE HOUSING

The CRA works alongside the Housing Division to administer affordable housing incentives. The joint mission is to preserve and develop affordable housing in Lakeland, as well as expand economic opportunities for families of low to moderate income.

## INFILL LAND BANK

The Infill Land Bank Program had 15 lots start construction in the Midtown CRA district during the fiscal year, with 6 completing construction and 4 being sold. The four lots that sold in FY21-22 used the down payment assistance program, and we anticipate the remaining lots will also use the program, creating a significant increase in applicants in FY22-23. The second round of the infill land bank will be getting under way this year, with 14 CRA owned lots and 53 total lots within the Midtown CRA district.

CRA-FUNDED INITIATIVE	PROJECTS
INFILL LAND BANK PROPERTIES SOLD	4
INFILL LAND BANK PROPERTIES UNDER CONSTRUCTION	9
INFILL LAND BANK PROPERTIES MADE AVAILABLE FOR PROGRAM	14
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>27</b>

# OWNER OCCUPIED REHAB

The Fix-It-Up Program provides assistance to property owners within the specified target areas of the Midtown CRA. Eligible projects include essential exterior repairs or enhancements to the properties to improve safety, property values, and the aesthetics of the neighborhood.

During fiscal year 2021-2022, five homes received CRA funding through the rehab program totaling \$67,305. Six CRA approved projects are pending and several others are eligible to receive CRA funding.



BEFORE



AFTER

The rehab program has been slowed greatly by the market conditions, while there is a wait list, the CRA and Housing Division will work to continue providing incentives to qualified homeowners in the upcoming year.



BEFORE



AFTER

## MULTIFAMILY DEVELOPMENT

No CRA money was awarded for multifamily development in FY21-22, partly due to stricter requirements from Florida Housing Finance Corporation (FHFC) which made it difficult for a community that has been awarded (FHFC) funds in the last two years to win funding for tax credits. The Lakeland area will be eligible again this year, and we plan to have funding available for that funding cycle. The housing division is also planning to offer some multifamily gap funding for local developers or smaller developers that are not applying for tax credits in FY22-23.

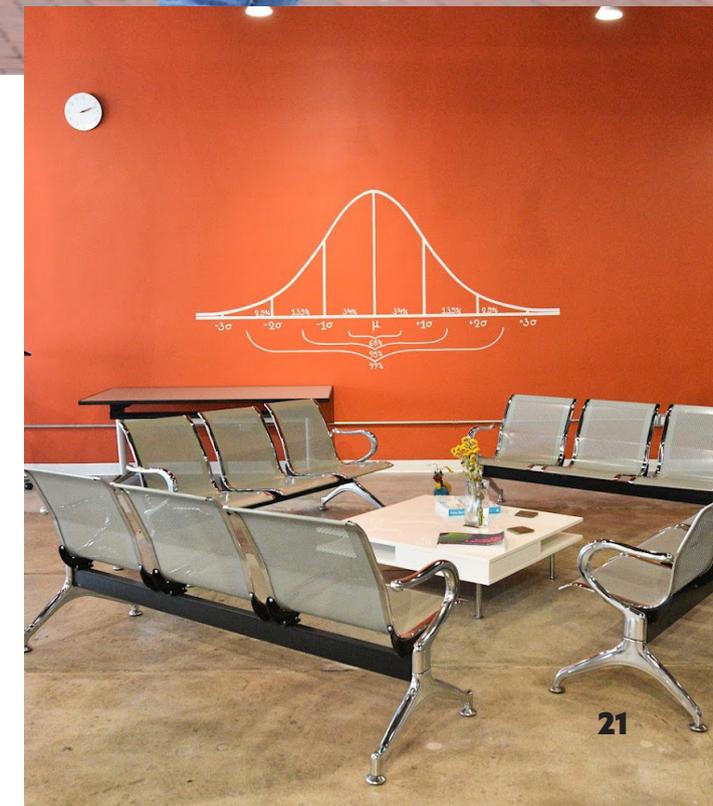
## SEPTIC-TO-SEWER STUDY

The housing division completed the Septic-to-Sewer study in August 2022, recognizing the need to assist several neighborhoods that currently use onsite septic systems. Infrastructure improvements to these neighborhoods would improve opportunities for infill housing development, as well as overall quality of life, environmental, and health improvements to existing residents. The study has led to continued efforts in identifying prioritized neighborhoods and analysis of available grants for tank abandonment, utility connections, and resident education on sewer connections.

# RESILIENCE & RENEWAL... LOOKING AHEAD

While the work of a CRA is focused on rebuilding communities, in 2022, the Lakeland CRA staff has also undergone a rebuilding process. Our focus was resilience in bringing projects to completion. In 2023, with a new team and renewed energy, we are regaining momentum with exciting new opportunities. Those include:

Midtown's 27 distinct neighborhoods are ripe for reinvestment to support small businesses and a thriving business environment. In the coming year, Midtown will see more sidewalks, with the CRA delivering needed infrastructure and safety connections the community has requested. In addition, East Main Street District, leading to Lake Mirror, and Rose Street offer opportunities for reinvestment in streetscape improvements, district branding, and walkability in a key location. The CRA's significant investment in the Mass Market area and strategic land acquisitions opened the door for a public-private partnership in an exciting mixed-use residential development providing high-quality workforce housing.





Dixieland investment is focused on the conditions surrounding South Florida Avenue. The CRA will work with Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) to ensure the conversion to a permanent 3-lane configuration is both safe and beautiful.

Downtown is thriving with investment, and the CRA is the community advocate for ensuring equitable connections for neighborhoods, small businesses needing capital to start or compete, and older buildings needing investment to be competitive with new construction. Downtown will also see the CRA-incentivized Oak Street Development come to realization.

Downtown West is undergoing a strategic planning process, having drawn new attention since the opening of Bonnet Springs Park. The area expands into all 3 CRA districts, and the planning process will highlight underutilized areas with opportunities for future investment. The Five Points Roundabout project the CRA is funding behind the RP Funding Center adjacent to Veteran's Memorial Park is expected to alleviate this confusing intersection and renew a dated crossroads. The CRA also provided increment rebates for development of mixed-use apartments for Carter USA at the former Florida Tile site which has broken ground and is currently under construction.

Catalyst 2.0 is an exciting new digital platform that visualizes what has been built, what will be built, and what can be on potential infill vacant or underutilized sites. In partnership with the Lakeland Economic Development Council (LEDC), the CRA will use this platform to attract more investment into all districts.

**The Lakeland CRA team embraces the vision of our city and its neighborhoods. We look forward to expanding our revitalization efforts through collaboration, partnerships, and investment.**



# LAKELAND CRA

COMMUNITY REDEVELOPMENT AGENCY

join us

## CRA ADVISORY BOARD

1<sup>st</sup> Thursday @ 3pm | City Commission Conference Room

## CITY COMMISSION

1<sup>st</sup> & 3<sup>rd</sup> Mondays @ 3pm | City Commission Chambers



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@LakelandCED



@LkldCED

photo credit

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