

COMMUNITY REDEVELOPMENT AGENCY
CITY OF NEW SMYRNA BEACH, FL



2007
ANNUAL REPORT



COMMUNITY REDEVELOPMENT AGENCY
BOARD MEMBERS

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THOMAS WILLIAMS

KEVIN FALL, PROJECT MANAGER
NOELEN FOSTER, COORDINATOR
CLAUDIA SOULIE, ADMINISTRATIVE SPECIALIST

CITY OF NEW SMYRNA BEACH
CITY COMMISSION

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COVER PHOTO: RENEE RICHARDS

HISTORY OF THE CRA

In the mid-1980's, the business and government communities in New Smyrna Beach recognized that there was a need to address the declining business climate in the older core commercial areas of the City. The City Commission appointed a task force of business and property owners to examine the economic condition of the City's commercial core and recommend actions to address the problems. The Downtown Redevelopment Task Force met in late 1984 and early 1985 before recommending the City Commission establish a Community Redevelopment Agency (CRA) under the provisions of Chapter 163 Florida Statutes. The City Commission accepted the recommendation and directed that work begin on the establishment of the agency.

The task force and consultants developed a finding of necessity that established the justification for the district, delineated the district boundaries, and prepared a master plan to guide the redevelopment efforts in the district. The City Commission adopted these documents in July of 1985 thus establishing the New Smyrna Beach Community Redevelopment Agency. Over the years, the efforts of the CRA have resulted in major capital investment from the public sector and a corresponding investment from the private sector. Total assessed value in the district has multiplied many times over the past twenty years with the 2007 contribution to the CRA Trust Fund from tax increment revenues amounting to \$3,467,345. Although for the short term, tax increment revenues are expected to decline in reaction to the downturn in the real estate markets, implementation of the Redevelopment Plan should not be adversely impacted.



Revenue growth is important only to the extent that it contributes to the redevelopment objectives. Capital improvements are the items that generate the most attention and excitement, but the selection of projects must complement the overall goals as they are presented in the master redevelopment plan. Initially, the CRA began its building program by acquiring land and developing parking lots to support the existing business areas. These modest first efforts have been followed by large-scale park and streetscape projects, but the CRA has continued to invest in smaller improvements where these will yield results.

In 1995, the agency undertook a review of its original redevelopment plan along with an overall review of agency operations. An outside consultant not involved with the original development of the program conducted this review. After a period of study involving City Commission, CRA Board and public participation, an updated redevelopment plan was issued. The updated plan confirmed the capital projects in the original plan

were still valid, added additional projects, and recommended the CRA direct its primary attention to capital projects in support of its core mission of economic development. The revised redevelopment plan has now become the guiding document for the CRA program.

In 2000 the first major expansion of the CRA District boundaries was completed. The CRA expanded its area west of U.S. 1 to about three times its original size. The CRA conducted a finding of necessity to qualify the additional land area and prepared an amendment to the Redevelopment Plan to identify projects and other improvements needed to support the redevelopment of the area. The City Commission approved the expansion, and the CRA has subsequently undertaken the initial phases of the improvement program for this area.

In addition to capital projects, the CRA has coordinated with the local business community to provide low cost training on a variety of business topics. The CRA has invested in studies of the local market to support business recruitment efforts, and has created matching grant programs to encourage private investment. Also, support programs have been developed to help mitigate the business impacts from streetscape construction. The CRA has supported the local merchants associations as a vital partner in the efforts to provide a quality physical and successful business environment.

In 2008, the CRA Board will seek professional services to provide an update of the adopted Redevelopment Plan including updated financial projections, revised project cost estimates and schedule of improvements.

CRA DISTRICT BOUNDARY



2007 ACTIVITIES

Completion of the \$1.85 million City Marina renovations, which started in 2002, was the highlight of 2006 for the Community Redevelopment Agency. Primary capital projects started last year were continued through 2006 with significant progress made toward implementation. In addition, the CRA Board started a new residential property improvement grant, established a formal grants and aids program and continued repairs to lighting and infrastructure.

WEST CANAL STREETSCAPE & CANAL LINING PROJECT

The West Canal Streetscape & Canal Lining Project is a joint project with the Florida Department of Transportation to improve conditions along the primary entrance to the City of New Smyrna Beach's downtown historic district. The project includes utility work (storm drainage, sewer and water services), roadway reconstruction, new curbs, new sidewalks, underground utilities, and street amenities including landscaping, benches, lighting, signage, and other street furniture. The project is intended to complement the existing streetscape on East Canal Street from US 1 to Riverside Drive, a CRA project completed in 1993.

The canal is a historical remnant from the early development of the New Smyrna Beach area and runs under the present day main street, appropriately called Canal Street. A canal liner will be redesigned, permitted and constructed inside the existing canal that runs along the north side of Canal Street. This portion of the work is fully funded by the FDOT and is intended to stabilize the drainage system to improve storm water flow through the system and to protect adjacent properties from potential deterioration of the old canal structure.

The streetscape element of the project is intended to improve the aesthetics of the roadway through resurfacing of the road, installation of new sidewalks and curbs, new pedestrian and roadway lighting, and new street furnishings such as trash cans, benches and bicycle racks. Once completed, West Canal Street will retain its on street parking and two-lane design, however bicycle lanes will also be provided both sides of the roadway. Additionally, all overhead utilities within the project area will be relocated underground. Sidewalk design and some of the street furnishings will follow the patterns established on East Canal Street to visually link the two sections, however landscaping on West Canal will use more deciduous trees such as oaks and magnolias while de-emphasizing the palm trees.

The streetscape element also contains plans to upgrade an existing City park to accommodate the inclusion of public art. An archway made of coquina rock (local to the area) will be constructed at the park site to match the existing coquina arch that was installed during the east Canal Streetscape in 1993. Decorative tiles on benches (painted by local schoolchildren) and sidewalk murals are also anticipated for the streetscape element. Additionally, local civic organizations have proposed the construction of a native butterfly garden to enhance the opportunities available at the park.

As part of the West Canal Streetscape & Canal Lining Project, the CRA purchased property in the area to provide temporary parking for the community during construction of the project. The construction of the temporary lot will provide an additional twenty-three (23) parking spaces for use during construction, including one (1) handicapped space.

The West Canal Streetscape & Canal Lining Project is scheduled to begin construction in the Spring of 2008 and be completed within twelve months.

FLAGLER AVENUE BOARDWALK REPAIRS

The Flagler Avenue Boardwalk is one of the most popular and widely used CRA projects in the City. The Boardwalk is located at the eastern terminus of Flagler Avenue and provides parking and recreational opportunities to both visitors and residents of the City. The Boardwalk was re-constructed by the CRA in 2000 and has deteriorated significantly ever since. Adverse weather conditions, age and the extreme high saline environment have led to the deterioration of both the vertical pavilion and boardwalk structure and the foundation underneath the boardwalk.

The CRA has spent a great deal of time, effort and resources to create a positive, attractive environment at the Flagler Boardwalk. In late 2006, the CRA entered into an agreement with a local professional architectural firm to review the existing boardwalk design and make recommendations on a method of repair or redesign. The recommendations ranged from minor redesign of the existing structures to a complete demolition and redesign of the entire boardwalk, however a preferred method of rehabilitating the sub surface foundation was not agreed upon.

Due to continuing deterioration of the sub surface and the Boardwalk structure, the CRA is pursuing professional technical assessments for remedying the ongoing deterioration underneath the Boardwalk facilities. It is anticipated that the CRA will continue to seek out alternative methods to complete the Boardwalk Repairs in 2008.

MARY AVENUE STREETScape PROJECT

The Mary Avenue Streetscape Project is intended to serve as a “demonstration project” for the CRA in the Westside Neighborhood area. The existing conditions along Mary Avenue are not unlike similar residential streets in the Westside Neighborhood area; substandard public right of way, historic trees, buildings and structures at or adjacent to right of way, lack of sidewalks and/or designated pedestrian/bicycle areas.

Improvements to Mary Avenue will create an attractive gateway entry from a major corridor (US 1), provide for on street parking, new pedestrian and roadway lighting, sidewalk upgrades and a bicycle path. With the assistance of local residents and community members, the CRA developed a variety of alternatives for the Mary Avenue Streetscape Project and developed a design that allows for nested parking, decorative lighting, enhanced landscaping and a bicycle / pedestrian walkway.

The final design of the Mary Avenue Streetscape Project was completed in 2007. The project is fully funded with tax increment revenues and is targeted for construction to begin in 2008.

SOUTH ORANGE STREET & PARKING LOT IMPROVEMENTS

The CRA has authorized the South Orange Street and Parking Lot improvements to provide an upgrade to the existing storm water system to control flooding and upgrade aging infrastructure in several key areas. As a part of this project, the CRA will undertake streetscape enhancements to include repaving, new curbs and gutters, sidewalks, landscaping, lighting, and burying of secondary electric lines. As a result of public meetings and CRA Board discussions, the design will also include bump outs at the intersections to calm traffic and break up the linear look of the street. The CRA will also reconstruct the Orange Street Parking Lot to provide a paved and striped surface that will maximize the number of available public parking spaces.



Design work for South Orange Street and the Orange Street Parking Lot was completed in the summer of 2007 and the CRA is prepared to proceed with construction bidding activities. Construction is targeted for late 2008.

ESTHER STREET PARK

The CRA has partnered with the New Smyrna Beach City Commission and Volusia County in an application for grant funding from the Florida Communities Trust to purchase property at the eastern terminus of Esther Street. Conceptual plans have been developed for the property and include the construction of storm water facilities and a parking area, and the installation of recreational amenities.

The Esther Street Park Project is intended to relieve prolonged flooding and drainage problems in the local area while providing much needed off street parking for visitors to the area. The installation of park features and amenities have been targeted to provide additional recreational opportunities for visitors and residents.

FLAGLER AVENUE SIDE STREET IMPROVEMENTS

The CRA has completed survey work on the side streets that intersect Flagler Avenue. Flagler Avenue is the City's historic commercial corridor on the beachside filled with an eclectic mix of specialty shops and restaurants. The CRA has focused efforts on improving the linkages with the adjacent neighborhoods through improvements to the side street connections. The CRA is currently conducting survey research with the area property owners to establish the coordination needed to extend the improvements down each intersecting side street.

FLORIDA REDEVELOPMENT ASSOCIATION ANNUAL CONFERENCE

The 2007 Florida Redevelopment Conference was held in nearby Daytona Beach, Florida, and highlighted redevelopment projects and concepts that have been successfully implemented in other Florida cities. The CRA facilitated a bus tour of the New Smyrna Beach Community Redevelopment Area and included stops at previously completed CRA projects including the Canal Street, Flagler Avenue and Boardwalk, North and South Causeways, Riverside and Buena Vista Parks. The CRA also distributed informational handouts to those in attendance that summarized the narration of the tour and provided additional information regarding the history and opportunities that exist in the New Smyrna Beach area.

CANAL STREET CONTRACT POSTAL UNIT

The Canal Street Historic District is the financial core of the City of New Smyrna Beach. Over 150 businesses operate within the District including investment, finance, mortgage, real estate, accounting and legal services companies. Despite this high concentration of professional services, the District lacks a full service, postal facility. The absence of this essential service limits downtown business growth and needlessly draws hundreds of residents, business owners and visitors away from the District every day.

Over the years, the Community Redevelopment Agency has invested significantly to restore the infrastructure and beautify the Canal Street Historic District as a framework for economic growth. Restoration of a full service postal facility through a Contract Postal Unit would provide a major contribution to the economic vitality of downtown New Smyrna Beach.

The CRA provided staff support and coordination in the development of an application to the United States Postal Services (USPS) for the authorization of a Contract Postal Unit to be operated out of an existing business on East Canal Street. It is anticipated that the application will be submitted to the USPS in 2008.

PROPERTY IMPROVEMENT GRANT PROGRAM

The Property Improvement Grant Program was initiated in 1990 as a means to assist local businesses and property owners in upgrading their properties by providing a financial incentive to help offset the full cost of the improvements. The program is also intended to direct individual site design to support the overall design themes contained in the CRA design guidelines.

At the close of 2007, the total amount of Property Improvement Grants awarded by the CRA was \$435,742. The total amount of corresponding private investment these grants have generated was \$5,711,429.

RESIDENTIAL PROPERTY GRANT PROGRAM

The Residential Property Grant Program was initiated in 2007 to provide assistance in improving the exterior appearance of residential structures and encourage investment in residential neighborhoods within the New Smyrna Beach Community Redevelopment Area. The exterior appearance of homes plays an important role in creating a positive image of neighborhoods while improving the quality of life in the community.

At the close of 2007, the total amount of Residential Grants awarded by the CRA was \$15,000. The total amount of corresponding private investment these grants have generated was \$32,600.

GRANTS & AIDS

The CRA Board finalized a formal grants and aids policy in 2006 and accepted its first round of applications in conjunction with the 2006-2007 fiscal year.

In 2007, the CRA awarded a single grant to the Gallery Group in the amount of \$15,000 for assistance in marketing the historic commercial districts. The applicants must demonstrate that the grant activity will generate positive regional attention for New Smyrna Beach and will enhance the economic viability of the CRA Area. As this program is fairly new, the total amount of grant funds awarded to date has been \$39,418.

LOOKING FORWARD TO 2008

The CRA anticipates an aggressive work program in 2008, as several CRA projects will move from the design phase towards construction. With an annual goal setting workshop targeted for early 2008, the CRA Board will have an opportunity to prioritize existing projects and lay the groundwork for the 2008 Update to the Redevelopment Plan. Additionally, the CRA has coordinated with local community partners including the Bert Fish Medical Center to provide solutions to further the redevelopment goals of the area. The CRA will continue to promote local economic development through coordinated efforts with the local business community in projects that enhance the overall economic climate of the CRA area.

The CRA will continue to fund its highly successful Property Improvement Grant Program and provide for public art and grants for eligible activities. The CRA Board will also look to further its role in the provision of public parking and open spaces and to develop an effective way finding system for the CRA area.

Residents and business/property owners are encouraged to contact staff or Board members to acquire or provide additional information. Public meetings are an integral part of major CRA project and the Board actively solicits the opinions of those impacted by the CRA work program.

FINANCIAL CONDITION

The New Smyrna Beach Community Redevelopment Agency is in sound financial condition. The data presented in these pages shows the Agency's financial condition as of September 30, 2007 as reported in the City's Comprehensive Annual Financial Report. The balance sheet shows that the CRA has assets of over \$8.9 million to support annual operations and planned capital improvements. The CRA has a very limited current debt level, and all current debt is targeted for retirement in 2010.

CRA Balance Sheet

Assets:

Cash and cash equivalents	\$8,944,465
Receivables	<u>\$ 1,350</u>
Total assets	\$8,945,815

Liabilities and Fund Balances:

Accounts payable and other current liabilities	\$ 25,966
Reserved for encumbrances	\$ 41,937
Reserved for Community redevelopment projects	<u>\$8,877,912</u>
Total liabilities and fund balances	\$8,945,815

CRA Statement of Revenue and Expenditures

Revenue:

Taxes	\$1,121,745
Intergovernmental	\$2,374,747
Miscellaneous	<u>\$ 410,034</u>
Total revenue	\$3,906,526

Expenditures:

Economic environment ¹	\$ 591,979
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Other Financing Sources (Uses)

Transfers in (out)	\$(1,897,983)
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Excess of revenue over expenditure and other uses \$ 1,416,564

Fund Balance, beginning of year	\$7,503,285
Fund Balance, end of year	\$8,919,849

Notes:

¹ Expenditure for economic environment includes personal services, operating expenses and capital outlay.