



CITY OF BARTOW
COMMUNITY REDEVELOPMENT AGENCY REGULAR MEETING
WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 25, 2026 AT 8:30 AM
OR AS SOON THEREAFTER AS POSSIBLE
450 NORTH WILSON AVE., BARTOW, FL 33830

AGENDA

1. CALL TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL
2. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE TO THE FLAG
3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES
 - a. January 8, 2026, Work Session
 - b. January 28, 2026, Regular Meeting
4. CONSIDERATION OF QUESTIONS FROM THE FLOOR, PETITIONS, COMMUNICATIONS
 - a. Matters not appearing on this agenda.
 - b. Matters appearing on this agenda but not scheduled for a separate public hearing.
5. FINANCIAL REPORT(S)
 - a. January 31, 2026, Financial Report
6. NEW BUSINESS
 - a. Review and take action on the Community Redevelopment Agency's Three-Year Strategic Work Plan.
 - b. Discussion and take action on the Community Redevelopment Agency's Logo
 - c. Review and take action to approve the Community Redevelopment Agency's Community Murals for public viewing at Over the Branch Park and Summerlin Street
 - d. Discussion on the Community Redevelopment Agency's Business Retention Grant Program.
7. OLD BUSINESS - NONE
8. REPORTS

- a. Executive Director
- b. CRA Attorney
- c. City Commissioner
- d. Board Members

9. NEXT MEETING DATE

- a. Wednesday, March 4, 2026, 8:30 A.M., Special Meeting

10. ADJOURNMENT

Please be advised that if you desire to appeal from any decisions made because of the above hearing or meeting, you will need a record of the proceedings and in some cases a verbatim record is required. You must make your own arrangements to produce this record. (Florida Statute 286.0105). The City Commission may continue the public hearing(s) to other dates and times as it deems necessary. Any interested party shall be advised that the date, time, and place of any continuation of these or continued public hearings may be announced during the hearing and that no further notices regarding this matter will be published. If you are a person with a disability who needs any accommodation to participate in this proceeding, you are entitled, at no cost to you, to the provision of certain assistance. Please contact the City Clerk's Office at 450 N. Wilson Avenue, P.O. Box 1069, Bartow, Florida 33831-1069 or phone (863) 534-0100 within 2 working days of your receipt of this meeting notification; if you are hearing or voice impaired, call 1-800-955-8771.

**COMMUNITY REDEVELOPMENT AGENCY WORK SESSION
THURSDAY, JANUARY 8, 2026, 8:30 A.M. (EST)
BARTOW PUBLIC LIBRARY
2150 S. BROADWAY AVENUE, BARTOW, FL 33830**

The Community Redevelopment Agency had a Work Session on Thursday, January 8, 2026, at 8:30 a.m. at the Bartow Public Library located at 2150 S. Broadway Avenue, Bartow, Florida. Notice of this meeting was posted at City Hall, Bartow Public Library, and the city's website.

MINUTES

CALL TO ORDER

Executive Director Smith called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m.

ROLL CALL

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT: Board Member Shana Bennett, Board Member Jerome Corbett, Board Member Anthony Ghent, Vice Chairperson, Board Member Cheri Kelley, Board Member Sandy Mendez (arrived at 3:16 p.m.), and Board Member Gordon Greene, Chairperson (attended by Zoom)

BOARD MEMBER(S) ABSENT: Board Member Dr. Tom Santarlas

CITY COMMISSIONER(S) PRESENT: Commissioner Laura Simpson and Commissioner Trish Pfeiffer

STAFF PRESENT: Executive Director C. Howard Smith, Business and Community Engagement Coordinator Cheryl Baksh, CRA Counsel Drew Crawford, City Manager Mike Herr, Communication Director Laurie Hayes, and Deputy City Clerk Donna Donaldson.

NEW BUSINESS:

1. **Board preview of the CRA's revised 2026 Updated Redevelopment Plan and Outline of Key Project(s) and Programming Focus Areas that include Land Acquisition, Public-Private Partnerships, Connectivity/Activation of Public Places, and Special Projects within the East and West End CRA areas for Redevelopment completed by the Central Florida Regional Planning Council.**

Executive Director Smith explained that today's work session is to review the redevelopment plan with the Central Florida Regional Planning Council (CFRPC) and to update the CRA's strategic plan. He stated that in 2024, the State required all CRAs to adopt a plan and goals, list them on the city's website, and update them every year. He noted that having a plan to work towards helps guide their decisions and makes it easier to describe what redevelopment would look like in the future. He stated it is critical that the plan that is in place be the guide for their decisions.

Executive Director Smith explained that there will be breakout sessions and everyone should not be afraid to ask questions about some initiatives, projects, or goals that the board may like to see happen.

Executive Director Smith engaged the board members in a communication exercise. He emphasized that whenever a board member is in public, they represent the CRA. Therefore, it is crucial to communicate clearly and understandably when addressing the public.

Executive Director Smith announced that Ms. Beneshea Frazier and Brenda Torres from the Central Florida Regional Planning Council are present today to discuss the redevelopment plan. He explained that the plan should include a comprehensive redevelopment approach that aligns with various projects. The goal is to seek guidance and direction on key decisions while providing concrete visualizations of what the redevelopment could look like. He emphasized the importance of creating a plan that reflects Bartow's character. Additionally, he mentioned that reviewing the redevelopment plan could involve expanding the district boundaries to include the Carver Recreation Center and the Masonic Lodge on Parker Street.

Ms. Beneshea Frazier, Economic Development Director and **Ms. Brenda Torres, Community Engagement Manager and Senior Planner** with the Central Florida Regional Planning Council (CFRPC), gave an overview of the findings of necessity and the redevelopment plan.

Ms. Frazier stated she wanted to present the board with a broad document so the board could develop programs and projects aligned with the CRA. This document would be a tool for the Executive Director to use to provide the board with an indication of an idea that may align with the plan but also aligns with previous conversations with the community. She continued her presentation, explaining that there are 15 conditions in the Florida Statutes that indicate blight. She explained that in order to be considered "blight," the area must have two or more indicators from Chapter 163 to be considered blight. Other areas of the presentation covered:

- Plan Components – there are certain factors that must be in the redevelopment plan document. If a potential funding idea is not in the plan, then it cannot be funded. She noted that not all ideas in the plan must be funded.
- CRA Mission – it is an overview of what CRAs typically focus on in terms of their mission. Bartow CRA's mission is to eliminate slum and blight.
- Background – gives information on how the CRA was established. In this background, the proposed development sites, Carver Recreation Center and Tuscan Masonic Lodge, were included.
- Finding of Necessity – it is important to survey the community to establish if a specific area has indications of slum and blight. She explained that there are some conditions in which you cannot see the slum or blight.
- CRA Plan Update – the benefit of an update is that the staff should be working towards its goals continuously. This is the time to re-evaluate the current issues and

determine how to move forward with additional recommendations. This amendment would include the proposed sites.

City Manager Herr asked about the Tax Increment Financing (TIF) projects and whether they pertain only to the proposed sites or also take into account existing development and development opportunities across the CRA boundary.

Ms. Frazier stated the TIF projections are for the CRA boundaries, including the two proposed sites.

Executive Director Smith stated that if the CRA correctly reinvests and redevelops key areas and meets those projections, it would increase property values within the CRA district, thereby increasing its monthly trust fund dollars.

Ms. Frazier showed the board members pictures of sites in need of redevelopment.

Executive Director Smith mentioned that the findings of the necessity and the redevelopment plan update will be presented at the next CRA meeting for review and adoption. He stated that this would be the CRA's document outlining how it will conduct its redevelopment moving forward.

Ms. Frazier continued her presentation by going through the Findings of Necessity document. She pointed out some of the updates within the document:

- Introduction page – addressed the Florida Statute and what the metric is for meeting blight. It also included the proposed sites within this document.
- Boundary Map – it was updated to include the expansion of the boundaries to include the two proposed sites.
- Definition of Finding of Necessity – an area is eligible for designation as a Community Redevelopment District if one or more of the three conditions of slum, or two or more of the fifteen conditions of blight, are present.
- Slum and Blight Evaluation – shows the conditions that the proposed sites meet the slum and blight criteria

City Manager Herr asked whether the finding of necessity pertained only to the expansion of the CRA boundaries to include the two proposed sites.

Ms. Frazier responded yes because the CRA is contemplating additional property, it is required to execute a finding of necessity study.

City Manager Herr asked if the city is going to be expected to do something about the flooding issue with the Carver Recreation Center or does it have to meet a statutory requirement.

Ms. Frazier mentioned that the city must comply with statutory requirements. She noted that the updated CRA plan provides guidance, allowing Executive Director Smith to develop a mitigation program, although it is not mandatory.

Executive Director Smith stated that if the Parks, Recreation, and Cultural Arts department addresses an issue, then the CRA could assist that project with funding.

City Manager Herr mentioned that the Carver Recreation Center is among the finest recreation centers in the county. He highlighted the impressive indoor capacity, but believes the outdoor fields need to be reassessed to improve their capacity. He feels that the outdoor facilities are currently underutilized.

Ms. Frazier stated that the proposed redevelopment plan is extremely broad. She stated that all the comments and concerns could be captured through programming by the Executive Director and the plan.

City Manager Herr stated that the \$18 million is the total amount intended to develop a public-private partnership for the redevelopment of specific properties. He reminded the board that a couple of months ago, he emphasized the need for the CRA to be bold, and he still believes that boldness is necessary. However, he mentioned that as he gets closer to the reality of property taxes, he struggles with the balance between boldness and recklessness.

City Manager Herr expressed concern about the uncertainty surrounding legislative actions regarding CRAs. As part of the \$18 million plan, he asked the CRA Counsel to revisit a previous bill that had been favorable last year but did not progress. He explained that the city structured the \$18 million funding around the timeline of that legislation, which addresses the expiration of CRAs.

City Manager Herr emphasized that the team needs to forecast the return on investment in terms of increasing the taxable value to the CRA over time as the properties are redeveloped. He believes that focusing on commercial redevelopment opportunities is essential since commercial properties will continue to contribute to the property tax base. Additionally, if the redevelopment efforts help reduce blight, that adds value as well. It is not just about increasing property tax revenue to boost the increment; multi-family and commercial developments, along with the creation of small business opportunities, are key components of the CRA's framework.

Furthermore, City Manager Herr noted that staff should examine every vacant parcel in the area, regardless of ownership, as significant dilapidation is present in the CRA district, particularly in single-family homes. He acknowledged that while the city cannot make up for the last twenty years of neglect, it can be ambitious and confident about the future.

Ms. Frazier went over some of the updates in the proposed redevelopment plan:

- Executive Summary – indicates that it includes the Carver Recreation Center and Masonic Lodge, indicates previous updates to the plan, and identifies the proposed objective and goals.
- Economic analysis – it includes demographic information relative to the Bartow CRA, City of Bartow, Polk County, and the State of Florida.

- Land Use characteristics – helps when you try to conceptualize what area to target for development opportunities within the boundaries of the CRA.
- Market analysis – it highlights certain areas that the CRA could dedicate its time to invest in and utilize as a catalyst to advance private sector investment and increase the tax base.
- Objectives and Goals – they give the CRA permission to do whatever it wants within the Statutes. It also identified areas that needed help, and the Executive Director developed programs and initiatives aligned with these areas. The Executive Director must bring them forward to the board for approval, and he must develop a matrix and directives for these programs, which must also be approved by the board.

Executive Director Smith mentioned the home the CRA was going to purchase and how it did not go through due to title issues. He stated the CRA is working in conjunction with city departments. The CRA should never take over any projects at 100%; it should work with city departments to determine how it can maximize the resources they have to address any issues.

Ms. Frazier went over the Relocation Assistance. She stated that, should an incident occur requiring the relocation of a resident or a business, this section allows the CRA to develop programming around it. She also went over a list of funding opportunities for the CRA to utilize. She mentioned the tax increment revenue projections. She asked the board to pay attention only to the increment revenue and cumulative revenue columns. She stated that cumulative revenue does not contemplate programs and projects that utilize funds. She noted that in 2050, the CRA is projected to secure \$168 million. This does not include staff executing programs and projects in or allocating funding towards those projects.

City Manager Herr asked if this takes into account homestead properties.

Ms. Frazier responded negatively. She proceeded with the plan update, noting that a survey had been conducted, but it had very few participants. She highlighted what she found most interesting: the most common issues identified in the survey:

- Revitalizing vacant and underused buildings
- Supporting small businesses
- Create more affordable housing
- Reduce blight and code issues

City Manager Herr told a story about a lady who travels the city in her wheelchair. He asked the board to imagine how she has to travel to get to Publix from where she lives. He noted that there had to be a better way for someone like her to travel safely around town.

Executive Director Smith stated that the CRA will introduce programming to address this type of issue. As the organization develops its three-year strategies and goals, mobility will be a key focus. He emphasized that the CRA aims to support initiatives that help individuals become more self-sufficient and less reliant on others.

City Manager Herr stated that CRA planning is very important and that it is incremental. He stated this morning has shown him to look at the statutory provisions of what the CRA is organized to do. He stated we need to look at the city geographically, and then look at what needs to be addressed, then look at the program goals and align those program goals with the areas geographically, and then look at the funding strategies and outside sources to levy the tax increment to see how the city can address the infrastructure, housing, recruitment, and retention.

Executive Director Smith stated that the current plan was updated in 2022 but lacked vision and guidance for moving forward. He expressed that he is accustomed to having well-written plans that address the CRA as a whole. These plans typically outline what redevelopment should entail, including potential funding opportunities that the CRA could take advantage of.

City Manager Herr emphasized the lack of understanding among legislators regarding the true purpose of CRAs. He believes in the importance of effectively communicating the successes of the CRA since its inception in 2000, focusing on job creation, increased tax base, and improvements in housing, including affordable options. He noted the significant financial impact of removing homestead exemption homes from the tax roll, which would lead to a loss of \$3.3 million for the city, while property tax revenue is only \$7.5 million. He expressed concerns about budget constraints, particularly regarding the police department, and indicated that he cannot recommend cuts to law enforcement due to state governance. As the increment for the city is \$1.4 million, he suggested careful investment decisions, particularly concerning the \$18 million loan repayment. He recommended reevaluating the CRA branding, developing a spending plan for the next few years, and creating an inventory of city-owned vacant parcels to bolster small business growth. He also highlighted the need to update zoning regulations to better serve future development goals.

Ms. Frazier pointed out the page that listed all the developed parcels, vacant parcels, and the geographical representations of both types of parcels.

Ms. Frazier mentioned that the questions asked earlier in the presentation should be directed to Executive Director Smith, who will forward them to her for a response. She pointed out that one of the questions was to provide a list of vacant parcels along with pictures that demonstrate blight. She also encouraged everyone to let her know if there were any additional information they would like to see included in the document, and she will make sure to incorporate it.

Executive Director Smith noted that following today's meeting, he would like the board members to schedule one-on-one meetings with Ms. Frazier for the preparation of the regular meeting on January 28, 2026. During these meetings, they can discuss this issue as well as any other questions or concerns they may have.

City Manager Herr asked the board members if they would be willing to write to their legislative delegations, provided with the names and addresses, in support of the Central Florida Regional Planning Council (CFRPC) and encourage them to maintain its

existence. He noted that every year, there is typically a bill introduced to eliminate regional planning councils throughout the State of Florida. He noted that their presentation today shows the importance of their work.

Executive Director Smith called a five-minute recess at 10:35 a.m. He reconvened the meeting at 10:40 a.m.

CRA Business and Community Engagement Coordinator Cheryl Baksh presented the 2026 Community Engagement Plan, which includes a recurring "Connect & Collaborate" series and an IMPACT (Inspiring Meaningful Projects and Community Transformation) neighborhood beautification program. The overall goal is to strengthen relationships among residents, local businesses, and city departments in the Community Redevelopment Area through regular engagement sessions and volunteer-led improvement projects.

The Connect & Collaborate Community Business + Resource Series will consist of six sessions held alongside existing engagement meetings, generally on the last Tuesday every two months beginning February 19, 2026. Each session will take place at a different CRA business or community venue, feature a specific City department (such as CRA, Solid Waste, Human Resources, Parks & Recreation, Fire Department, and Library), and include a special guest representative. Sessions are scheduled for February 19, April 28, June 23, August 25, and October 27, 2026, with a final session in January 2027; no sessions will occur in November or December due to the holidays.

Executive Director Smith stated that they will continue to highlight the CRA through these sessions and ensure collaboration with the city's departments. Additionally, they aim to educate citizens about the various services the city provides. He noted that there are several events throughout the year that the city's citizens, especially seniors and parents who do not work, are unaware of.

CRA Business and Community Engagement Coordinator Baksh stated that the IMPACT Program will fund volunteer-based beautification and revitalization projects in four areas: residential beautification, street and sidewalk maintenance, vacant lot restoration, and public space revitalization. Eligible organizations may receive up to \$1,000 in matching reimbursement grant for approved materials and equipment, with applications required to include a project proposal, budget, and documented volunteer commitments. For 2026, staff will focus on three west-side faith-based partners—First Providence Missionary Baptist Church, Praise Temple Deliverance, and Providence Progressive Baptist Church—with initial outreach underway and key dates including an application deadline of March 20, 2026, and a cleanup day on April 25, 2026, coordinated with Solid Waste and Keep Polk County Beautiful.

Executive Director Smith stated he will be contacting the Parks, Recreation, and Cultural Arts Director and Assistant Director regarding the entrance way areas and getting an inventory of the intersection to help beautify those areas. He believes this would be a great project for the Diversity luncheon team to participate in.

2. Board review of the CRA's current Strategic Two-Year Work Plan objectives related to Corridor Redevelopment, Housing Stock Expansion, Targeted East and West End Revitalization, and Complete Streets Initiatives.

Executive Director Smith mentioned that two years ago, the board developed a two-year work plan. The goal of this work plan is to guide the CRA staff in making decisions about which projects to pursue and how to approach redevelopment in a comprehensive manner. This is intended to ensure that the work leads to clear and successful outcomes. He stated that Mr. Robert Allen, HCP Associates, will be presenting the 2025 Annual Performance Standards report.

Mr. Robert Allen, HCP Associates, mentioned that the footage taken at the last IMPACT event was submitted for an award, and he will inform everyone if it wins.

Mr. Allen stated that this annual performance standards report is created to meet the new state requirements and to document results across five program areas, plus priorities for 2026:

- **Purpose and context**

The report fulfills Florida HB 7013 by documenting the CRA's FY 2025 goals and objectives, the performance measures used, which goals were achieved, and which were not. It explains that the Bartow CRA, established in 1990, works to eliminate blight and promote redevelopment in a 2.47-square-mile district through public-private partnerships and infrastructure improvements.

- **Mission, board, and FY25 highlights**

The CRA's mission is to eliminate blight and encourage investment that improves neighborhoods, grows the economy, and preserves community history within the CRA district. FY25 highlights include 6 million dollars in transformative redevelopment incentives, more than 2,620 pounds of trash removed via IMPACT cleanup, over \$200,000 committed to commercial enhancements, and over \$235,000 committed to residential renovations. A seven-member Board appointed by the City Commission oversees policy, budgets, and projects, working with the Executive Director to implement the Community Redevelopment Act.

- **Key wins in FY25**

The report emphasizes four major wins: sustained downtown investment and infrastructure improvements, expanded placemaking and community identity efforts, stronger business and property reinvestment support, and clearer strategic alignment on housing, economic development, and reinvestment priorities. These advances are framed as building on the strategic framework adopted in FY 2024 and positioning the CRA for continued impact.

- **Program areas, goals, and performance**

The CRA organizes its work into five program areas with specific goals and metrics.

- **Property Acquisition & Construction:** Awarded a \$2,650,090 construction contract for the Innovation Center (target completion October 2026), acquired two strategic properties (Orpheum Theatre and Prince Hall Masonic Lodge) with \$241,822 in acquisition costs, and secured \$6 million in bonded capital for major projects.
- **District Activation & Placemaking:** Hosted a community cleanup with 180+ volunteers removing 2,620 pounds of trash, acquired an outdoor vacuum sweeper, contracted a "clean team" to begin in FY26, funded a dedicated community policing officer (\$111,508.58), and invested \$202,794.75 in public art.
- **Commercial Redevelopment:** Awarded six façade grants totaling \$49,428 and one commercial enhancement grant of \$39,247, supporting businesses such as The UPS Store, Meeks Realty, The Wine Stable, Brenda's One Stop, Palace Pizza, and Sweet Magnolias.
- **Public Spaces Redevelopment:** Funded the Bartow Squeeze micro-transit service (\$31,720, 2,249 passengers), advanced the Golfview Avenue sidewalk project, repaved 2.41 miles of streets across 16 streets (\$483,121), presented streetscape/traffic calming concepts, installed new baseball field lighting at Carver Recreation Center (\$52,000), and built two ADA-accessible public restrooms (\$701,000).
- **Residential Redevelopment:** Improved 10 homes through the Owner-Occupied Rehabilitation Program (\$235,775.75), helped 5 buyers with down payment assistance (\$82,000), and supported construction of 5 new single-family homes with \$91,269 in incentives.

- **Looking ahead to FY 2026**

For FY 2026, the CRA plans to complete or advance several major initiatives, including: opening the CRA Innovation Center at 180 Central Ave N as a hub for entrepreneurship, workforce development, business support, and regional partnerships; advancing an East-End Vision for mixed-use housing and commercial development along Main Street; and moving into implementation planning for Main Street streetscape and traffic calming improvements. The CRA will also continue residential rehab, down payment assistance, and commercial improvement incentives, while expanding district activation through a new Block by Block Clean Team, additional murals, enhanced events, and ongoing beautification.

City Manager Herr stated that some valuable information was shared today. He emphasized that when the CRA has a compelling story about its opportunities, it is time to invite people in and actively market the CRA's properties. He noted that if

the city cannot attract people from its own community, it should not rely on Orlando or Tampa for support. The city should focus on engaging residents from Lakeland and Winter Haven. He mentioned inviting those who did not win the hotel project bid in Lake Wales to be included in the RFP process. He mentioned that the city has several small projects that developers could profit from. Additionally, he highlighted the need for the city to effectively communicate its story and help promote itself.

3. Board discussion on the CRA's Marketing, Branding, and Communication Plan and Implementation Timeline.

Mr. Robert Allen, HCP Associates, stated as to the branding, there have been several drafts of the CRA logo. He stated that he would be sending the board members a link with a brief five question survey of what their feelings are about different elements of the logo. He stated that the colors are a major part of the logo because that is what is going to drive the design of the CRA's new website. He is hoping to have the website up and running by February. He stated that they have approximately 4-6 logo options that they want to present to the community and get feedback from them. He stated this is something that he is very eager to conclude, so he can move on to promoting the new website and all the exciting programs, including the changes that were discussed today.

Executive Director Smith emphasized the importance of defining and communicating the city's identity through its brand and logo. He noted that the brand should reflect the best version of the city and convey its values, history, and connections with organizations such as the Chamber of Commerce and Main Street Bartow. As planning moves toward 2050, they encouraged consideration of color, messaging, and imagery that align with this vision. He also highlighted that the branding effort represents not just a physical or visual update but a "rebirth" in thinking and approach. Finally, he encouraged board members to reflect on best practices and ensure that all materials and projects represent the agency and the board at their best.

CRA Counsel Crawford provided a legislative update, noting that the upcoming state legislative session is scheduled to run from January 13, 2026, through March 13, 2026. He explained that the Governor has called a special session in April to address congressional redistricting, which may allow the Legislature to carry over unfinished items from the regular session. Currently, approximately 1,496 bills have been filed, with about 700 under active consideration.

CRA Counsel Crawford reported that, so far, no new legislation directly impacting CRAs has been introduced, though updates are possible as the session progresses. He reminded the Board that similar CRA-related language was proposed and later removed during last year's session. He anticipates clearer direction on property tax and redevelopment issues by mid-session.

CRA Counsel Crawford also mentioned that the most discussed property tax proposals involve increasing the homestead exemption (possibly up to \$500,000) and adding exemptions for seniors. However, he noted that the City's financial team found that no senior exemptions have been filed in Bartow to date.

Executive Director Smith discussed the plan to present an item for Board adoption at the meeting on January 28, 2026. He also introduced the upcoming Direct Connect transportation program, noting that the prior Citrus Connection service ended as of July 1, 2025. The new program will partner with the transit provider through a grant-funded 50/50 cost share over the next three years to offer transportation services for seniors within the CRA district.

Executive Director Smith explained that the service will allow seniors to be picked up from their homes and taken to essential destinations such as grocery stores, medical appointments, and public facilities, including the library, then returned home. He emphasized the importance of ensuring seniors have safe, reliable transportation options and stated that additional program details will be shared soon.

Executive Director Smith concluded by highlighting how this initiative and other efforts—such as programming, connectivity, and joint ventures—reflect the CRA’s commitment to practical, action-oriented solutions rather than studies that sit on the shelf. He thanked the Board for their continued service and dedication.

CRA Counsel Crawford explained that the proposed exemption relates to constitutional authorization allowing local governments—such as municipalities or county commissions—to adopt ordinances granting certain property tax exemptions. These exemptions may provide up to \$50,000 for residents aged 65 and older who hold legal or equitable title to their property, maintain it as their permanent residence, and have a household income of \$20,000 or less. He noted that additional conditions may apply when the assessed property value is below \$250,000. Crawford added that implementing such exemptions requires local government action, which may not currently be in place.

City Manager Herr expressed his appreciation for the productive discussion held during the morning session and noted that he anticipated the afternoon session would be equally valuable.

4. Develop a Strategic Three-Year Project and Implementation Plan Outline for approval at the next CRA board meeting.

Mr. Robert Allen, HCP Associates, stated that this document outlines the January 8, 2026, Bartow CRA Redevelopment Plan Workshop, which is an input-only session to gather board guidance for updating the CRA Redevelopment Plan.

Mr. Allen mentioned that after the presentation, he plans to divide everyone into two work groups for more in-depth discussions on the four proposed categories. He explained that each group will engage in a series of question exercises. The purpose of these exercises is to gather ideas and discuss what participants would like to see, as well as any challenges they have faced in the past.

- **Purpose and structure**

The workshop is designed to listen and learn from Board members, gain a fresh perspective on CRA goals, shape direction for which initiatives to emphasize, and build consensus on priorities. The agenda includes a review of the 2021 Plan, introduction of a new four-category framework, category-by-category discussions, a boundary expansion update, and next steps.

- **Shift to four priority categories**

The CRA is moving from broad thematic objectives to four action-oriented strategic categories to better align initiatives and track progress. The four categories are: Property Acquisition & Construction, District Activation & Placemaking, Commercial & Public Spaces Redevelopment, and Residential Redevelopment; existing 2021 initiatives (including East and West End projects) are reorganized into these groups.

- **Category highlights**

- **Property Acquisition & Construction:** Focuses on strategic land assembly and CRA-led transformational projects, including the East Main/Cigar Factory site (potential 200–250 multifamily units plus retail), West Main Cement Plant, MLK/330 and 335 E Main parcels, and opportunistic acquisitions along the East Corridor.
- **District Activation & Placemaking:** Emphasizes public realm, parks, gateways, and trail connections with initiatives such as Masonic Lodge and 335 E. Main Street conversions, Polk Street Park, gateway improvements, and the Fort Fraiser Trail connection into downtown.
- **Commercial & Public Spaces Redevelopment:** Supports private investment and upgrades in commercial corridors, including Downtown Main Street, MLK Jr. Boulevard, East Main Street/US 17, West Main Street gateway, and corridor beautification (façades, signage, landscaping).
- **Residential Redevelopment:** Targets neighborhood stabilization and housing diversification through “missing middle” housing, North Neighborhood improvements, East End revitalization, infill housing, and a Paint Up/Fix Up homeowner assistance program.

- **Discussion process and next steps**

For each category, Board members use post-it notes to record ideas, then share and discuss as a group, addressing priority sites, desired uses, needed public spaces, business types, and housing needs. After the workshop, staff and consultants will compile input, synthesize priorities into themes, and develop a draft revised framework for the Redevelopment Plan, which the Board will review with further opportunity for input before adoption.

Executive Director Smith called for a lunch break at 11:38 a.m. The work session reconvened at 12:27 p.m.

The board members broke into breakout groups to discuss property acquisitions and construction, district activation and placemaking, commercial and public spaces redevelopment, and residential redevelopment. Some of the suggestions were:

- Beautify the corridors leading into the city and its facilities.
- Connecting the city's gateways and trails to make it a seamless path.
- Wayfinding and gateway improvements. Conduct a wayfinding study to determine the appropriate layout and signage.
- Programming will bring more people to downtown Bartow. Customers have mentioned that local events should feature new and diverse vendors, rather than the same ones offering similar items but arranging their items differently each year.
- Social corridor would be the 100 through 300 block on Main Street.
- Finding different ways for placemaking and beautifying the area.

Executive Director Smith emphasized the importance of considering Arts in Public Places, noting that potential debt may require a revision of the budget as the CRA works on its work plan. This work plan will focus on their priorities, which must align with the budget. It is essential to ensure there is sufficient funding to support these initiatives, whether they take place this year, next year, or in the following years.

Executive Director Smith pointed out that not all projects can be completed simultaneously. For instance, if the board decides to focus on placemaking this year, it may limit the possibility of addressing it again next year. If capital improvement and housing are both priorities, it is likely that only one of these can be tackled this year. If capital improvement takes precedence, housing initiatives may need to be postponed. Therefore, programming projects must align with the budget. He concluded by stating that the CRA cannot always provide everything to everyone.

Board Member Kelley emphasized that the CRA should have been addressing this issue earlier. She pointed out that the organization needs to concentrate on one project at a time. If the CRA attempts to tackle several initiatives simultaneously, it risks repeating the stagnation seen 20 years ago, resulting in no progress being made. She stressed the importance of focusing on a specific project, completing it, and then moving on to the next one.

Executive Director Smith stated that the CRA would not be focusing on housing this year. Instead, the primary objectives are to complete flood mitigation projects, improve the flooding issue on Tee Circle, and address sidewalk enhancements. He explained that once the priorities are established, it will be the staff's responsibility to take items from the list and ensure they are completed.

Executive Director Smith explained that if the tax increment increases, it will continue to grow each year. He emphasized that there is nothing wrong with the CRA making money, as long

as it reinvests those funds back into the district. He projected that as the CRA approaches its sunset in 2050; the tax increment could reach approximately \$12 million. However, he noted that reinvesting this funding does not imply that the agency can address every need every single year.

Board Member Bennett raised a concern about whether the entities partnered with the CRA should be informed in advance to prevent a repeat of previous challenges. She described the situation as difficult because it seemed to involve a sense of entitlement on the part of one individual. She expressed her belief that this was fundamentally wrong. She emphasized that the CRA has a responsibility to advocate for numerous people, whereas this individual was advocating for some. She pointed out that this person had already received more support than anyone else, yet they were now causing issues that forced staff to reallocate funding from other important areas to appease them.

Executive Director Smith mentioned that he has spoken with the relevant parties and informed them that the CRA is not moving forward with renewing their contract. He clarified that no one has the entitlement to CRA funds. He further explained that there are existing contracts in place, which allow the CRA to terminate them at will. The main consideration for funding is the budget, and any entity with a contract will only receive funding if it is available. If the focus of the project changes and funding is not aligned with CRA priorities, the CRA is under no obligation to provide financial support. He stated the CRA has to align its projects with its funding.

Mr. Allen asked if the board is interested in different commercial corridor enhancement programs for businesses to apply for. He also asked if there is an area that needs more CRA attention than others.

Board Member Kelley stated that, in her opinion, it is a whole thing, it is not separated. She stated that from the top of Polk Street to Main Street, to Broadway Avenue, then go east to L.B. Brown Street, to Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard, to Carver Center is one corridor that takes you from one facility to the other, which is the one path that most people take.

Executive Director Smith asked if the CRA wants to focus on the businesses and parcels along Main Street, Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard, East Main Street, Highway 17, West Main Street, and Polk Street areas to make sure there is funding for them to revitalize their homes and/or businesses.

Mr. Allen stated that the CRA could focus its existing programs on a specific corridor for reasons such as constructing a large building nearby and wanting to improve the surrounding area. He mentioned that there is a valid argument for pursuing this approach in either direction. He believes this is a good question for the board to debate. However, he argues against selecting two or more areas, noting that it would raise the question of why the CRA is excluding another area. He thinks it would be better for the CRA to have a targeted plan for the region or a program to apply to. He believes that having a program would be more politically favorable and help maintain some type of foundational relationship with the providers.

Vice Chairperson Ghent inquired whether a prepared statement could be provided for situations where individuals ask why a particular area is not being addressed. He emphasized that it would be helpful to communicate that the CRA is not denying anyone; rather, it is simply not focusing on that area at this time.

Executive Director Smith explained that anyone is welcome to apply, but if all available spots are filled, they will need to wait for the next application cycle to open. He emphasized that effective communication of this information is crucial. He also mentioned that once the new CRA website is live, all relevant details will be clearly presented. Board members will simply need to direct people to the website, as it will contain all the necessary information.

Executive Director Smith asked Commissioner Pfeiffer for her thoughts on the CRA and its key focus areas. He emphasized that the agency's activities have a significant impact—both positively and negatively—on the city. Based on his research, he noted that the CRA's past focal point has been the downtown area, not the CRA district as a whole.

Commissioner Pfeiffer explained that the city has both a district and a core, emphasizing that many people outside the city do not understand that the downtown district is the heart of the city. She believes in focusing on developing the core before expanding outward. She pointed out that there are deficits in the 200 block of the district and provided an example of the Phillips building located in the 300 block.

Commissioner Pfeiffer described the conflict between the city and the building owner, which stemmed from a disagreement over a realignment issue back in 2005. She mentioned that the city should have enacted an ordinance requiring annual inspections of unoccupied commercial buildings. She highlighted the specific case of the Phillips building, which had been unoccupied and developed a hole in the roof that worsened over time, allowing water to intrude for years. On a visit to the building, she found it was filled with black mold. She noted that although the building could have been repaired, it was ultimately demolished, resulting in the city losing a historic structure. She contacted the city manager at the time and told them that this could not continue to happen. Any commercial building in the downtown area and CRA corridor needs to have an inspection every year to make sure the landlords take care of their buildings.

Commissioner Pfeiffer mentioned that a developer had come to the city and purchased at least six buildings, including the Hacienda Restaurant building. She stressed the importance of the city protecting these significant buildings. She focuses on identifying the gaps in the area that need to be filled with developments that activates, contributes, vibrates, and draws. The 200 block is particularly important to her because it fosters connectivity, community engagement, and a visually appealing atmosphere.

Commissioner Pfeiffer discussed the trees in the 200 block of Main Street. She emphasized the importance of replacing trees when they are cut down, explaining that greenery plays a vital role in the community, as she learned at various conferences. She noted that the trees used to conceal the lights and signage of businesses, but now that they have been trimmed above the lights and signage, downtown looks beautiful. However, she pointed out that the crepe myrtles in front of Palace Pizza Restaurant were not trimmed properly, and their

appearance is quite poor. She concluded by stating that Bartow has a wonderful layout with its east and west corridors.

Executive Director Smith stated that with the CRA accruing debt, he thinks about the space it has at 335 East Main Street. If it is done as a commercial mixed-use, he thought of incentivizing a business that is currently not in the area to occupy the bottom floor. He asked the board what type of businesses are missing and would like to see in the CRA district. He stated that he does not want to bring in something that will capitalize the CRA district. He mentioned there are no entertainment or fitness centers in the downtown area. He mentioned some of the businesses he does not want to see are more bail bondsmen and tattoo shops.

Commissioner Pfeiffer mentioned that commerce is more effective than service. She stated the service does put feet on the street for lunch, but they are not a revolving door business, which is another problem for the 200 block on Main Street.

Mr. Allen stated that his review of the many programs that are in place for commercial enhancement is already tailored to where the recipients need a retail storefront to bring people in and buy, not a law office.

Commissioner Pfeiffer highlighted the issue of investor property owners who are indifferent to what goes into their buildings. She emphasized that landlords need to understand that this is not solely about their financial gain; it is about the overall health and environment of the downtown area, which they should not jeopardize. She pointed out that realtors are attempting to fill spaces in buildings that do not meet acceptable standards. These buildings are investment properties owned by individuals who do not live in the area, and the owners are primarily focused on filling the spaces.

Board Member Bennett mentioned that she has a friend who runs a successful planning business in Lakeland. She explained that Bartow's zoning regulations differ from those in Lakeland. In Lakeland, there is a rule that limits the number of the same type of business within a certain proximity. She pointed out that landlords share this mindset. Bennett questioned how we can expect building owners to adopt a similar perspective when the city itself is not setting that example. She emphasized the importance of retaining anchor businesses and expressed concern that if landlords feel unsupported by the city, they may have the attitude of "If the city allows multiple similar businesses, no one will thrive." She urged that the city should lead by example if we want landlords to follow suit. She then asked whether there is a zoning regulation the city could implement that would prevent the city from picking and choosing businesses but still allow for restrictions on certain types if there are already similar ones nearby.

Mr. Allen explained that there are many legal issues involved, and he is unsure how they work. He mentioned that if efforts are made to impose more restrictions, it could be considered "taking," which may lead to legal problems and potential lawsuits from the landowner.

Commissioner Pfeiffer mentioned that there is an overlay district that can be established, but the legislature is attempting to eliminate the city's ability to impose a business tax. She explained that the business tax receipt is important for ensuring that businesses register with

the city and comply with regulations. She pointed out that this process is necessary since no city staff members are monitoring this area.

Executive Director Smith explained that property owners have the greatest legal rights in the State of Florida. He stated that if the board would like to see something change, it should write a letter advocating for it or come up with an ordinance that would have to be passed by the City Commission.

There was a discussion about the types of restaurants suitable for downtown. It was noted that there is currently no Chinese restaurant in downtown. One of the main goals is to attract residents to the downtown area, as those who live there will be the primary patrons of local businesses. Executive Director Smith stated that if the nightlife could draw in 400 people, it would significantly transform the business landscape overnight. Other items that were mentioned to bring more people downtown were a bowling alley, a skating rink, an arcade, axe-throwing, an escape room, and laser tag.

Executive Director Smith noted that the extension of the parkway presents the opportunity for additional housing developments at the north end of Highway 17. He suggested that incorporating some form of entertainment feature at that location would be beneficial. He emphasized that this would be crucial. Furthermore, he mentioned ongoing discussions with the Bartow Economic Development Council (BEDC) about attracting two large chain businesses to the area near the parkway. One idea proposed was to consider something like a Buc-ee's in that location.

Board Member Kelley mentioned that, when trying to bring all these people into the city, there is the issue of parking.

Executive Director Smith inquired about how the CRA can better support local businesses and property owners.

Board Member Kelley inquired about their needs. She mentioned that the CRA cannot assist them if they do not communicate what they need.

Coordinator Baksh mentioned that many people seek assistance with new windows, doors, awnings, signage, and other improvements that can be funded through the CRA's façade grant. She noted that a couple of weeks ago, she and Executive Director Smith took a walk around the downtown area and observed that numerous storefronts require help.

Board Member Bennett asked about that part of the funding the CRA gives Main Street Bartow is that they had someone on site to help with menu development and website.

Executive Director Smith mentioned that the marketing efforts through Main Street Bartow are intended to benefit local businesses. According to the agreement between the CRA and Main Street Bartow, it is that anyone who obtains free membership through Main Street Bartow gains access to all their services for one year. This initiative aims to strengthen the connection between businesses and Main Street Bartow.

Board Member Bennett believes there is a section in the contract that covers part of the \$60,000 they receive from the CRA annually, which covers businesses not being deprived of the benefits that are being paid for.

CRA Counsel explained that it is required by the contract partners, so it certifies that the CRA does not discriminate based on legal means.

Executive Director Smith also addressed the question of what businesses the CRA is seeking. He explained that businesses desire funding for their entire projects, with the expectation that they won't have to be reimbursed to have someone come in and handle the work. While the CRA might be able to accommodate this request, it would require a significant change in their current approach.

Board Member Kelley stated that if the CRA does not know what the business owner needs then how are they supposed to help them.

Executive Director Smith gave a scenario of him taking advantage of a grant program to help with repairs in his house. He would be interested in using the funds for every inch of the property, including cleaning and improvements. He understands that the program operates on a reimbursement basis, meaning that he needs to complete the work first and then submit for funds. It would be helpful if there were a way to get the money upfront to facilitate the repairs, but he is aware that is not how it works. He would be committed to doing what is necessary to comply with the requirements.

Executive Director Smith mentioned that the target programs were restricted due to a directive regarding the second and third floors. At that time, two years ago, the board decided not to make any adjustments because of the entire budget situation. Additionally, some business areas were unoccupied.

Executive Director Smith stated that after reviewing the statement, it seems that there might be some misunderstandings. These services were reallocated to ensure that the space remains protected. He wanted to address all of this effectively. He believes the CRA can make a positive change for the public, but it also needs to adhere to timelines.

Executive Director Smith asked to revisit these issues, as the CRA cannot afford to remain in its previous predicament. It needs to address the matter promptly rather than postponing it. It is not acceptable to wait indefinitely. The CRA must look at the business personality profile in certain cases to move forward effectively, as he believes it can utilize what the CRA has to accomplish its goals.

Board Member Mendez used Maria from the Hacienda Mexican Restaurant as an example. Maria was looking into financing to relocate but could not get approved for a loan. She explained that, like most restaurant owners, her profit margins are not huge, and they are not millionaires. Because of this, finding financing on her own was not sufficient to secure the funds needed to purchase a building. Essentially, we own the building and are making investments, which is the kind of commitment that could attract potential buyers.

However, someone interested in buying a restaurant might not have \$1 million readily available. If banks were willing to loan that amount, it would be helpful for startup businesses. When Board Member Mendez bought her building, she was fortunate that she and her mom had the means to sell their homes, which helped her make the purchase of her building. Many new business owners don't have that option and cannot easily acquire a freestanding building. She asked that at the time she started her business with no experience, what bank would give her a loan for \$375,000 with no experience and no income? Securing that kind of financing is a challenge.

Executive Director Smith believes that, from a service perspective, it's important to approach it strategically. It wouldn't make sense to take on a venture without a solid business plan, and it's crucial to have someone with experience to guide you. The city has talented people who excel with their products, especially in the food industry, but they might not follow best practices, which is essential for success.

For example, Maria has been in the industry for over 15 years and has operated without proper protocols. It raises the question of how they achieve success without protecting themselves or their business effectively. While she aims to provide excellent food, she should also recognize the importance of having proper safeguards in place.

Ultimately, you would need to present something substantial to the bank to secure support for their endeavors, especially when it comes to supporting our youth.

CRA Counsel Crawford stated that the process of borrowing and lending involves two phases, known as arbitrage, which present certain challenges. A recent analysis with the bond council focused on financing a multibillion-dollar acquisition of five properties using tax-free notes. However, the private use test may render this approach unfeasible, requiring borrowing at commercial interest rates and creating mortgage obligations. The situation hinges on whether sufficient capital is available—if so, it allows for more autonomy, while borrowing imposes federal tax restrictions.

Executive Director Smith is considering developing a marketing toolkit to enhance outreach through cloud-based materials and social media strategies. He emphasizes the importance of creating opportunities for community connections and envisions a program focused on technical assistance. He plans to implement a collaborative marketing strategy with the Chamber of Commerce and local organizations to promote the entire district, highlighting its strengths rather than individual businesses, in compliance with government conduct regulations.

Vice Chairperson Ghent suggested developing a system that integrates wayfinding signage with decision assistance. The focus is not on physical signage on buildings but on creating a more accessible method for identifying nearby businesses and restaurants beyond the visible main areas. For instance, there is currently limited awareness of establishments located on adjacent streets, such as Main Street. Existing materials, like printed maps, are not consistently available to everyone, resulting in most attention being directed only toward Main Street.

A discussion was held regarding potential improvements to business signage within the downtown area. From a program standpoint, there is interest in developing a coordinated sign initiative that would provide consistent and updated signage for local businesses. The goal would be to create a cohesive look, for example, using standardized mailbox-style signs similar to those already seen along Main Street.

It was noted that implementing such a program would likely require updates to the existing sign ordinance to ensure all building signage remains current and visually consistent. This could include options like exterior signage, painted designs, or window decals that reflect a unified downtown identity.

If supported, staff could develop a signage assistance program (potentially funded or subsidized) focused on the downtown core, in collaboration with business owners and the council.

Commissioner Pfeiffer noted that the City's sign ordinance needs updating, referencing prior efforts related to sign placement and design standards. She emphasized the importance of maintaining adequate ADA walkways and ensuring that signage is visually appealing and professionally executed. Commissioner Pfeiffer offered her graphic design expertise to assist in developing updated sign designs.

Commissioner Pfeiffer also noted the need for directories for multi-tenant buildings, particularly for upper-floor businesses. These directories could feature removable nameplates or decals to allow easy updates when tenants change. Ensuring uniformity and aesthetic consistency in signage was highlighted as a key priority.

Executive Director Smith stated that the CRA could take the lead on developing a signage program if the Board supports the initiative. The first step would involve the CRA drafting a letter in coordination with City staff to outline the program's purpose—advocating for improved signage and wayfinding. The goal would be to create consistent, updated signs that clearly identify businesses, including those located on upper floors, ensuring alignment with existing sign codes.

Board Member Mendez mentioned that it has been suggested over the past several years to have a digital sign at Fort Blount Park.

Executive Director Smith sought consensus from the Board on whether to pursue a letter to the City Commission advocating for an update to the City of Bartow's sign ordinance as an initial action item to support local businesses. He clarified that no motion was being made at this time but requested feedback from the Board.

Executive Director Smith noted that the current sign code is complex and outdated, suggesting a need for review and potential adjustment to enforcement procedures and fees. He mentioned that in the past, businesses were required to pay a fee per sign and have signage verified for compliance. Additionally, he raised concerns about unauthorized and temporary signs that detract from the downtown appearance. He proposed coordinating with Code Enforcement after further discussion to address these issues.

Mr. Allen stated that several existing programs related to neighborhood improvement and redevelopment are already underway, including efforts supporting new development, infill housing, and housing rehabilitation. He emphasized the importance of ensuring that all neighborhoods receive equitable attention and investment.

Discussion included housing types to be prioritized, with a focus on affordable housing options. Mr. Allen referenced the potential of smaller housing models, such as tiny homes and accessory dwelling units (ADUs), noting their benefits for affordability and income generation. He also highlighted that current building codes may limit the construction of smaller-footprint homes and suggested that legislative or code updates could help encourage more diverse housing types within redevelopment areas.

Vice Chairperson Ghent noted that housing needs vary among different age groups and family situations, including single-parent households. He observed that rental rates in the area remain lower than those in many surrounding communities, yet affordability continues to be a challenge. He also mentioned that there is strong public interest in affordable housing, with residents frequently inquiring about available options.

Board Member Mendez inquired about existing apartment options, referencing developments such as The Meadows on Church Street, The Gardens, and local senior living facilities. She noted the limited availability of multifamily housing within the city and emphasized the need for more balanced options that include affordable and workforce housing.

Executive Director Smith clarified that while the CRA does not directly fund housing development, the Board can provide guidance and program structure to encourage the construction of duplexes, triplexes, or similar units with designated affordable or workforce-rate options. He suggested that future development agreements could include affordability requirements for a portion of new units.

Executive Director Smith also mentioned that some planned housing projects, such as the development on Highway 17, may not move forward and could require repackaging for future consideration. He noted ongoing residents' concerns about rising rental costs and the shortage of affordable units, which reinforces the importance of strategic housing initiatives.

Mr. Allen noted that the CRA currently offers construction assistance opportunities for developers. He suggested that the Board determine whether this type of support should be further reviewed or modified and asked for input on whether to pursue additional discussion on the matter.

There was a discussion regarding the need to expand Bartow's housing stock to strengthen neighborhoods and retain long-term residents. He emphasized that while not all residents can afford to purchase homes, increasing rental and multifamily options is essential to community growth. Executive Director Smith noted that many tenants rent for short periods before relocating for lower costs, making balanced and affordable housing key to neighborhood stability.

It was noted that the city lacks adequate senior and workforce housing, and that some planned projects, including the Green Mills development, will not proceed. Developers have

shown limited interest in workforce housing due to lower profit margins. Executive Director Smith suggested exploring the development of architecturally appealing duplexes and townhomes near the downtown area to provide affordable and walkable housing options.

Recent and proposed developments—including projects on Crown Avenue, Stuart Crossing, and potential tiny-home units—and noted the ongoing challenges related to density and parking. He also stressed the importance of housing options for early-career professionals, such as new teachers, police officers, and government employees, who often face rising rents that exceed their entry-level salaries.

It was concluded that targeted investment in workforce and multifamily housing near downtown would be a “game changer” for the city, supporting both neighborhood growth and economic vitality.

Board Member Kelley stated that her top housing priorities are multifamily and affordable housing. She emphasized the importance of ensuring that residents can afford a place to live, noting that many younger individuals are unable to live independently and are staying with their parents. She also observed that senior living facilities are increasingly expensive, leading to situations where three generations are living together and effectively creating their own multifamily households.

Board Member Kelley advocated for the CRA to maintain funding to assist homeowners who wish to improve their properties. She noted that many families are staying in their homes longer because they cannot afford to purchase new ones, and assistance for upgrades—such as new windows, doors, or roofs—helps keep these homes safe and livable. She concluded that building new homes alone is not sufficient; if people cannot afford them, they will remain vacant. Supporting existing homeowners, she said, is key to strengthening the community.

Executive Director Smith stated that this would mean making sure the CRA has its owner-occupied rehab and a quality-of-life housing program that allows the seniors to remain in their homes.

Board Member Bennett asked if it is legal to add the aspect for veterans. She would like to see mixed use where there is a business on the bottom and housing on the top.

Board Member Corbett stated he would like to see affordable housing, not Section 8 housing, and mixed-use facilities.

Mr. Allen thanked everyone for their input and valuable discussion. He stated that the next step will be to compile today’s discussion into a draft framework, which he will share with Executive Director Smith and Coordinator Baksh. They will then present it to the Board for additional feedback to help shape the next three-year plan.

ADJOURNMENT

With no further business to discuss, Vice Chairperson Ghent adjourned the meeting at 4:41 p.m.

CHAIRPERSON GORDON GREENE

ATTEST:

ASST. CITY CLERK DONNA DONALDSON

(SEAL)

**COMMUNITY REDEVELOPMENT AGENCY
WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 28, 2026 – 8:30 A.M. (EST)
CITY HALL – CITY COMMISSION CHAMBER
450 N. WILSON AVENUE, BARTOW, FL 33830**

The Community Redevelopment Agency met on Wednesday, January 28, 2026, at 8:30 A.M. in the City Commission Chamber located at City Hall, 450 N. Wilson Avenue, Bartow, Florida. Notice of this meeting was posted at City Hall, Bartow Public Library, and the city's website.

MINUTES

CALL TO ORDER

Chairperson Greene called the meeting to order at 8:31 a.m.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE:

The Board Members and audience gave the Pledge of Allegiance.

ROLL CALL

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT: Board Member Shana Bennett, Board Member Jerome Corbett, Board Member Anthony Ghent, Vice Chairperson, Board Member Sandy Mendez, Board Member Dr. Thomas Santarlas, and Board Member Gordon Greene, Chairperson.

BOARD MEMBER(S) ABSENT: Board Member Cheri Kelley

CITY COMMISSIONER(S) PRESENT: Commissioner Trish Pfeiffer

STAFF PRESENT: CRA Executive Director Howard Smith, Business and Community Engagement Coordinator Cheryl Baksh, City Manager Mike Herr, Parks, Recreation, and Cultural Arts Director Jason Hargrove, Parks, Recreation, and Cultural Arts Assistant Director Kyle Lasek, CRA Counsel Drew Crawford, Captain Luke Hauser, and Deputy City Clerk Donna Donaldson.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

- 1. Regular Meeting September 24, 2025 (Review and Action)**
- 2. Regular Meeting October 29, 2025 (Review and Action)**

MOTION was made by Board Member Mendez, seconded by Board Member Bennett, to approve the September 24, 2025, and October 29, 2025, Regular Meeting minutes as presented.

VOTE TO THE MOTION WAS AS FOLLOWS:

AYE: Bennett, Corbett, Ghent, Mendez, Santarlas, Greene
NAY: None

Motion carried.

CONSIDERATION OF QUESTIONS FROM THE FLOOR, PETITIONS, AND COMMUNICATIONS:

1. Matters not appearing on this agenda.

Chairperson Greene opened and closed public comments on matters not appearing on this agenda. There were no comments.

2. Matters appearing on this agenda but not scheduled for a separate public hearing.

Chairperson Greene opened and closed the public comment period for matters appearing on the agenda but not scheduled for a separate public hearing. There were no comments.

FINANCIAL REPORTS:

1. Financial Report for October 31, 2025, November 30, 2025, and December 30, 2025 (Review and Action)

Executive Director Smith presented the financial report for October 31, 2025, November 30, 2025, and December 31, 2025. He gave a breakdown of expenses:

- October, November, and December variable expenses were: \$84,234
 - \$22,500 – owner-occupied rehab incentive grants for administrative services from Habitat for Humanity
 - \$7,365 – staff and board member conferences and training for November
 - \$16,500 – rental fee for the building the CRA is using for October.
 - \$49,395 – expenses that were spent in October 2025
 - \$10,268 – expenses that were spent in November 2025
 - \$24,570 – expenses that were spent in December 2025

(A copy of the October, November, and December 2025 financial reports is attached therein and described as Exhibit A.)

MOTION was made by Vice Chairperson Ghent, seconded by Board Member Mendez, to accept the October 31, 2025, November 30, 2025, and December 31, 2025, Financial Reports as presented.

VOTE TO THE MOTION WAS AS FOLLOWS:

AYE: Bennett, Corbett, Ghent, Mendez, Santarlas, Greene

NAY: None

Motion carried.

NEW BUSINESS

1. Review and take action to approve the Central Florida Regional Planning Council's (CFRPC) 2026 Redevelopment Plan for the Community Redevelopment Agency (CRA) for the district expansion.

Executive Director Smith stated that the process under discussion will take approximately six months to complete. He explained that the current presentation highlights the most important components of the project and noted that he will address any questions related to the presentation, the accompanying resolution, and the developer plans proposed for adoption.

CRA Counsel Crawford reviewed the formal process required to update and amend the Community Redevelopment Plan. He provided a presentation outlining the key historical milestones of the CRA, noting its establishment in 1990, area expansion in 2000, and the most recent plan update and trust fund extension in 2022, which now runs through 2050.

The proposed plan amendment expands the CRA boundaries to include Carver Recreation Center and the Masonic Lodge properties. He explained that this expansion triggers statutory steps, including notifications to taxing authorities, public hearings, and review by the Planning and Zoning Commission and City Commission.

He outlined upcoming dates and actions:

- Issue reports to taxing authorities following CRA adoption of the resolution.
- February 13, 2026, hold a joint meeting with the City Commission.
- February 23, 2026, have a public hearing at the Planning and Zoning Commission.
- March 2, 2026, final approval by the City Commission.
- March 4, 2026, CRA special meeting to approve pre-closing funding.

CRA Counsel Crawford noted that Polk County has indicated no objections to the proposed boundary expansion, as the affected properties are currently tax-exempt. He directed that approval of the CRA resolution will authorize staff to issue required notices and coordinate with the City for final adoption steps.

CRA Counsel Crawford noted that the next step is to proceed with the necessary motions and related actions. He stated that the primary item of business is a motion to approve the plan document. He indicated he would read the resolution by title, after which a motion would be made on the resolution itself. He also confirmed that the motions would be handled separately.

MOTION was made by Board Member Mendez, seconded by Board Member Santarlas, to approve the 2026 Community Redevelopment Plan.

VOTE TO THE MOTION AS FOLLOWS:

AYE: Bennett, Corbett, Ghent, Mendez, Santarlas, Greene
NAY: None

Motion carries.

MOTION was made by Board Member Mendez, seconded by Vice Chairperson Ghent, to approve the Finding of Necessity to add the Carver Recreation Center and Tuscan Masonic Lodge to the CRA boundaries.

VOTE TO THE MOTION AS FOLLOWS:

AYE: Bennett, Corbett, Ghent, Mendez, Santarlas, Greene
NAY: None

Motion carries.

CRA Counsel Crawford read the resolution into the record by title only:

"CRA RESOLUTION NO. 2026-01-R A RESOLUTION OF THE BARTOW COMMUNITY REDEVELOPMENT AGENCY RELATING TO REDEVELOPMENT PLANNING; MAKING FINDINGS; RECOMMENDING THAT THE CITY OF BARTOW ISSUE A FINDING OF NECESSITY FOR TWO (2) PARCELS OF LAND; RECOMMENDING FORMAL MODIFICATION, AMENDMENT AND RESTATEMENT OF THE COMMUNITY REDEVELOPMENT PLAN FOR THE BARTOW COMMUNITY REDEVELOPMENT AGENCY BY THE CITY COMMISSION OF THE CITY OF BARTOW; INSTRUCTING STAFF TO REPORT THE RECOMMENDED MODIFICATION, AMENDMENT AND RESTATEMENT OF SAID COMMUNITY REDEVELOPMENT PLAN TO ALL TAXING AUTHORITIES; REQUESTING COMPLIANCE BY THE CITY OF BARTOW WITH THE NOTICE REQUIREMENTS OF SECTIONS 163.346 AND 163.361 FLORIDA STATUTES; PROVIDING FOR AN EFFECTIVE DATE."

MOTION was made by Board Member Mendez, seconded by Vice Chairperson Ghent, to approve Resolution No. 2026-01-R A resolution of the Bartow Community Redevelopment Agency relating to redevelopment planning; making findings; recommending that the City of Bartow issue a finding of necessity for two (2) parcels of land; recommending formal modification, amendment and restatement of the Community Redevelopment Plan for the Bartow Community Redevelopment Agency by the city commission of the City of Bartow; instructing staff to report the recommended modification, amendment and restatement of said community redevelopment plan to all taxing authorities; requesting compliance by the city of Bartow with the notice requirements of sections 163.346 and 163.361 Florida statutes; providing for an effective date.

VOTE TO THE MOTION:

AYE: Bennett, Corbett, Ghent, Mendez, Santarlas, Greene

NAY: None

Motion carries.

(A copy of the presentation is attached therein and described as Exhibit B.)

2. Review and take action to approve the Citrus Connection's Mobility on Demand (MOD) Transportation Services Project.

Executive Director Smith gave a presentation on the Citrus Connection's Mobility on Demand Project. He explained that this program will be targeted towards seniors and people with disabilities, and how it will help them to get around town safely.

The presentation proposes a three-year Mobility on Demand (MOD) partnership between the CRA and Citrus Connection to provide on-demand transportation within a 2.5-mile zone in the downtown Bartow CRA, primarily serving seniors and individuals with disabilities.

The service would offer door-to-door and stop-to-stop trips, operate weekdays 6 a.m.–7 p.m. and Saturdays 6 a.m.–5 p.m., and allow same-day or advance booking online or via call center. It is intended to improve access to healthcare, employment, retail, parks, and public facilities and is presented as consistent with CRA statutory authority under Florida Statutes Chapter 163, including public transportation, elimination of slum and blight, and support for economic development.

Demographic data for the MOD area show about 5,300 residents, 9,465 jobs, high poverty (about 30%), notable disability and senior populations (each about 14%), and a significant share of

car-free or one-car households, underscoring mobility needs. Estimated total project costs are about \$213,651 in Year 1 (including purchase of one ADA-accessible van and start-up costs) and about \$140,862 in Year 2, with Citrus Connection covering 80% of vehicle costs and 50% of operating costs. Staff recommends CRA Board approval of a three-year agreement with Citrus Connection and authorization for the CRA Chair to execute agreements, with CRA Year One funding not to exceed \$95,000 from the FY 25-26 budget.

Board Member Mendez commented that, based on past experience with similar services, there is concern about committing to a three-year term if the program is not well utilized. They emphasized the importance of ensuring the investment provides value and noted a preference for not being locked into a full three-year commitment if performance is insufficient.

Executive Director Smith stated that the proposed three-year term is intended to ensure the program is set up correctly and has time to gain traction, particularly given the number of seniors and the presence of an assisted living facility within the CRA area. He emphasized that staff would actively promote and educate residents and local human service providers about the service, and that usage and performance would be reported regularly, such as every six months. He added that, if the service proves successful and demonstrates clear need, Citrus Connection could ultimately assume full operation of the program after the CRA's initial investment and start-up support.

Board Member Santarlas stated that a safeguard clause with an annual renewal option could be included in the contract to address concerns about a three-year commitment. He further commented that this is a terrific program and commended the staff for developing an initiative that reflects the core mission of the CRA by supporting residents who need assistance.

There was discussion about the proposed three-year Mobility on Demand agreement, with concern expressed about being locked into a long-term agreement if ridership is low and funds are not well used. Board members asked how service would be managed with only one vehicle, particularly if demand grows to the point that riders experience long waits or become discouraged.

In response, staff noted that usage data would be closely monitored over the first six months, including trip volumes, pick-up locations, and timing, to determine whether a second vehicle or service adjustments are needed. They explained that the service is targeted to seniors and individuals with disabilities within the CRA, but is technically open to all eligible riders, and that trips may extend to key destinations outside the CRA, such as medical offices, the Civic Center, recreation facilities, and the public library. Staff emphasized that rider education, advanced scheduling, and clear communication about how to use the service will be critical to managing demand and minimizing wait times and acknowledged that strong utilization may eventually require additional vehicles or expanded service.

There was further discussion about including banks and other frequently used locations as destinations for seniors and people with disabilities using the service. Participants clarified that the list of "points of interest" shown in the materials is illustrative rather than limiting, and riders will be able to request trips to other destinations within the service area.

It was noted that trips must begin or end within the CRA/service zone, but eligible riders can be transported to various businesses and services—such as grocery stores, pharmacies, and other common destinations—so long as they fall within the defined 2.5-mile radius. Staff emphasized that Citrus Connection would manage trip scheduling and routing when multiple riders have different destinations, and that the primary goal is to provide safe, convenient access for seniors and people with disabilities to essential services and businesses.

Executive Director Smith explained that the initial pick up is within the CRA district, but it can be used to take someone outside the district. He stated that the CRA is only covering the cost if it is within the CRA district.

Chairperson Greene noted that, as previously discussed, the goal is to seek a 50% funding contribution from the city, emphasizing that the service will benefit residents citywide, not just those within the CRA district. He added that, if the program proves successful, there will likely be a desire to support broader mobility options for trips originating in the CRA but traveling to destinations throughout the City of Bartow.

CRA Counsel Crawford stated that once the contract documents are in place and service performance can be evaluated, there may be opportunities to adjust funding levels, depending on how the agreement is structured. He noted that, in theory, trips beginning and ending outside the CRA district could potentially be addressed through the broader partnership with the transit agency.

CRA Counsel Crawford further explained that most points of interest are within the CRA, and that while bricks-and-mortar projects are typically limited to the CRA area, a mobility service that brings people into the district can still qualify for CRA funding. He added that nothing prevents the city from participating financially if the program grows into a larger citywide initiative, but emphasized that reliable data on usage and demand will be needed before pursuing that option.

MOTION was made by Board Member Santarlas, seconded by Vice Chairperson Ghent, to approve the Mobility on Demand agreement with Citrus Connect in the amount to not exceed \$95,000 with an indemnity clause.

VOTE TO THE MOTION:

AYE: Bennett, Corbett, Ghent, Mendez, Santarlas, Greene

NAY: None

Motion carries.

(A copy of the presentation is attached therein and described as Exhibit C.)

3. Review and take action to approve the Community Redevelopment Agency's Construction Manager at Risk (CMAR) contract and project budget to construct the CRA's Innovation Center.

Executive Director Smith requested approval of the construction contract and overall project budget for the new CRA office building at Central Avenue and Davidson Street. He noted that the property owner began the process in early 2024 and has since completed the necessary steps to qualify the site and advance the building design.

Executive Director Smith reported that bids received for construction ranged from approximately \$2.5 million to \$4 million, and a contractor was selected based on qualifications, experience, and proposed cost. He explained that, in addition to the building construction, the total project budget includes funding for equipment, furnishings, and technical features needed to outfit the facility as a municipal-standard building and CRA office. He added that a separate interior fit-out budget of about \$90,000—for items such as tables, chairs, and computers—will be brought back to the Board for consideration.

CRA Counsel Crawford stated that he is in the process of reviewing the resolutions, contracts, and related documents for the project and that the construction contract appears to be fair to both parties. He requested that any approval of the construction contract be made subject to completion of legal review. He further noted that the City will need to formally transfer ownership of the building site to the CRA, and that staff are coordinating with the City's partners to place that property transfer on an upcoming City Commission agenda so the CRA can proceed with the project.

City Manager Herr stated that the contract itself should be included with the agenda item for clarity, rather than listing only a generic "provider contract" description. He noted the importance of fully understanding the total project cost and scope, including both design and construction, before approval, and recommended that the contract be brought back to the Board once legal and insurance review is complete, rather than acting on it prematurely.

Chairperson Greene commented that he did not want the project to slow down for an extended period, such as 50 years, and emphasized the importance of moving forward without imposing unnecessary delays. He noted that while the contract must be followed, the Board should avoid creating rigid deadlines that could hinder progress.

CRA Counsel Crawford stated that, based on the upcoming meeting schedule over the next 30 days, the Board will have several opportunities to consider the construction contract, including a special meeting on February 13, 2026 and the next regular and special meetings in March. He noted that Board members should have the full contract documents in hand before taking action and indicated he is midway through his review, including questions about the guaranteed maximum price and what is covered within the contractor's proposal. He added that clarification is needed on whether the current amount includes design support during construction or if an amendment to the existing design contract will be required.

There was extended discussion about the need to include the full construction contract and bid tabulation in the agenda packet before approving the CRA building project. Participants sought clarification on the scope, including whether the selected contractor (Brotherhood Construction, chosen as the lowest responsible bidder among five qualified firms with bids ranging from \$2.5 million to nearly \$4 million) would handle interior design, furnishings, equipment, and subcontracted work such as electrical.

Board members and staff agreed that the contract follows a construction management at-risk model with a guaranteed maximum price (GMP) of \$2.5 million, designed to allow value engineering, owner-direct purchases for sales tax savings (about 7%), and competitive bidding on subcontracts to drive costs below the GMP. They emphasized opportunities for budget savings on the separate \$90,000 interior fit-out and noted the project will repurpose the facility to house the CRA office alongside CareerSource Polk and some City council office space.

Chairperson Greene suggested a motion be made to table action until the complete contract and bid details are provided for review at an upcoming meeting, ensuring transparency and legal clearance.

MOTION was made by Board Member Bennett, seconded by Board Member Mendez, to table this item until the complete contract and bid details are provided for review at an upcoming meeting.

VOTE TO THE MOTION AS FOLLOWS:

AYE: Bennett, Corbett, Ghent, Mendez, Santarlas, Greene

NAY: None

Motion carries.

(A copy of the presentation is attached therein and described as Exhibit D.)

4. Discussion and review of the Community Redevelopment Agency's three-year Strategic Work Plan.

Executive Director Smith stated that the document under consideration will formalize the CRA's work plan and strategy for fiscal years 2026 through 2029. He explained that it will elevate the existing strategy into the Community Redevelopment Plan, providing clear direction for capital projects, population engagement, communication programs, and development of commercial and public spaces. He noted that the findings from prior work sessions will inform the plan's approval process, after which staff will return with detailed funding guidance and project alignment for further Board consideration.

Mr. Robert Allen, HCP Associates, thanked the Board for their feedback from the strategic planning workshop and outlined four major objectives for the four-year CRA work plan: property acquisition and placemaking, commercial/public spaces redevelopment, and residential development.

Mr. Allen highlighted workshop priorities such as strategic acquisitions along East Main Street and US 17, development of community gathering spaces and Fort Fraser Trail gateway arches, Main Street and alleyway activation through programming, support for existing businesses via grants/vouchers and a marketing toolkit, attraction of sit-down restaurants and evening entertainment venues like a movie theater or bowling alley, and residential policies favoring single-family homes, workforce housing, and owner-occupied rehabilitation over large apartments.

Mr. Allen noted that staff will align these elements and present the finalized plan for Board approval at the February meeting.

Executive Director Smith introduced the next step of the presentation, which focused on branding and survey questions. He noted some deliberate design choices within the presentation. He commented that, similar to the previous presentation—which featured certain thematic elements—this one includes subtle variations that are intentional rather than coincidental.

Mr. Allen reported on post-workshop surveys that gathered 51 community responses plus feedback from CRA staff and Board members. He highlighted four key findings: a strong desire for a standalone CRA identity distinct from the city, preference for a modern color palette over rustic styles, emphasis on development and cooperation themes, and top iconography choices including the handshake (ranked #1 by both groups), oak tree, courthouse, housing, and progress motifs.

Community sentiment viewed the CRA brand as 66% forward-looking, energetic, open/inviting, serious, and bold. Mr. Allen presented two leading color palettes—labeled "heritage forward" (trustworthy, civic, welcoming, energetic) and a modern option (credible, progressive, organized, approachable, professional)—and requested Board direction to finalize selections, noting this will inform the draft website to be presented next month.

Mr. Allen noted that Board survey responses favored a professional yet approachable and welcoming brand identity. He presented icon survey results, highlighting the courthouse as both a top favorite for some and a veto option for others, while other design options developed with staff showed promise when paired with the leading color palettes.

Mr. Allen summarized community and Board feedback calling for a CRA brand distinct from but connected to the city, featuring a modern/progressive color palette (with Palette A ranking highest), emphasis on cooperation and partnership themes, forward-looking and approachable messaging, and avoidance of overly governmental or construction-focused iconography. He recommended Palette A (or Board consensus on either top option) and the handshake/cooperation motif as the strongest icon, paired with a modern font. He stated that the final logo and branding options will be presented in one-on-one meetings with Board members in February, ahead of the regular board meeting, followed by draft website delivery.

Executive Director Smith requested Board action on two key items stemming from the branding discussion. First, he sought approval of a color palette (noting Palette A ranked slightly highest in surveys) to guide website development and logo options, which will be reviewed next month, along with final survey results from approximately 40 community stakeholders surveyed this week.

Second, Executive Director Smith requested approval of the outline for the four-year CRA work plan based on the recent workshop priorities. Smith emphasized that over 40 responses in a short time demonstrate strong community understanding of the CRA's mission, identity, and service priorities.

MOTION was made by Board Member Mendez, seconded by Board Member Santarlas, to approve Palette A.

VOTE TO THE MOTION AS FOLLOWS:

AYE: Bennett, Corbett, Ghent, Mendez, Santarlas, Greene

NAY: None

Motion carries.

Executive Director Smith requested Board approval of the redevelopment outline for the work strategy and related projects, with formal adoption.

MOTION was made by Board Member Mendez, seconded by Vice Chairperson Ghent, to approve the redevelopment outline for the work strategy and related projects.

VOTE TO THE MOTION AS FOLLOWS:

AYE: Bennett, Corbett, Ghent, Mendez, Santarlas, Greene

NAY: None

Motion carries.

(A copy of the presentations is attached therein and described as Exhibit E.)

Chairperson Greene excused himself at 9:56 a.m.

OLD BUSINESS:

1. Discussion on the Block-by-Block Custodial Services for downtown maintenance.

Executive Director Smith provided an update on the CRA's first-year budget performance since no December review was conducted. He noted the implementation of block-by-block maintenance services in downtown Bartow, launched in October 2025, through a partnership with Parks and Recreation and a contracted vendor. He stated he would review performance outcomes, vendor reports, and merchant feedback to assess the program's effectiveness and consistency.

Assistant Director of Parks, Recreation, and Cultural Arts Kyle Lasek provided an update on the downtown custodial maintenance program launched in the first quarter. He reported positive merchant feedback on improvements, including pressure washing, trash collection, and overall cleanliness, which also covers downtown restaurants, with morning and evening services funded at approximately \$140,000–\$160,000 for the period.

Assistant Director Lasek noted weekly meetings with the vendor (Extremely Clean Janitorial Services), strong performance based on monitoring and vendor reports, and a planned February merchant feedback session following the October kickoff. He added that pressure washing has been completed, first-quarter expenditures total approximately \$71,200 (with final invoices bringing it to \$602,000), leaving funds available for other projects, and highlighted unexpected positive feedback on extended restroom hours, which is also saving the City overtime costs while maintaining quality standards.

Parks, Recreation, and Cultural Arts Director Jason Hargrove thanked the CRA Board and staff for their partnership funding the downtown maintenance program, noting its success in building strong interdepartmental relationships. He expressed enthusiasm for future collaborative projects and confirmed that, with finalized restroom signage invoices, the program will return over \$100,000 in unspent funds for other departmental priorities.

Board Member Bennett shared positive feedback on the downtown maintenance program, noting that she is among the first businesses to open each morning and has observed consistent, reliable service. She reported seeing city staff pressure washing her building and sidewalks—progressing nearly halfway down the street on one occasion—and praised the team for their clockwork reliability, hard work, and thoroughness. She stated she has never had issues with trash cans overflowing since the program began and offered only positive comments overall.

Board Member Mendez shared positive feedback on the downtown maintenance program, particularly appreciating the conveniently located restroom facilities, which have been a significant improvement for her business, given challenges with the building's 100-year-old plumbing. She recounted noticing when the cleaning crew missed a day, highlighting how much she and her customers have come to rely on their consistent presence, and praised them for eliminating overflowing trash cans and maintaining overall cleanliness. She emphasized that the service has made a noticeable difference and expressed gratitude for the program.

Assistant Director Lasek clarified that the maintenance crew operates Tuesday through Saturday and noted that weekend event coverage can be arranged if needed. He acknowledged that while the initial funding focused on weekdays, better communication about the schedule—including the absence of Monday service—was needed.

2. Discussion on the construction of public restrooms at Summerlin Boulevard and the Over the Branch Park.

There was not report on the restrooms but a comment was made that the downtown restroom is getting a lot of positive feedback from the community.

REPORTS:

1. EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Executive Director Smith reported on the following:

- February 13, 2026 – schedule a joint meeting with the City Commission to go over the project list. The time for the meeting has not been set, but once the time has been set, he will forward that information to the board.
- Will send out an email to confirm some dates to meet with HCP to do the one-on-ones.
- Sergeant John McKee was introduced as the direct support for Officer Duane Paul. Sergeant McKee introduced himself to the Board and provided a brief history of his background.

Business and Community Engagement Coordinator Baksh reported on the following:

- February 19, 2026, at 6:00 p.m. is the Community Engagement session. She will be accompanied by Kelly Carter, who is the Compliance Manager from the Polk County Neighborhood and Housing Department, to talk about CRA grants and the county's rehab program for the residents, and they are updating their comprehensive plan.
- Banner Pole Committee – accepting applications; there are twenty open slots, and the deadline to submit an application will be February 27, 2026.

2. CRA Attorney

CRA Counsel Crawford stated that he had emailed Board members the previous night regarding two recently executed service agreements from the past six weeks. He explained that the first was with Holland & Knight, serving as both counsel for ongoing matters and for an upcoming bond issuance, while the second was with Public Resource Advisory Group, a financial advisor assisting the City in determining bond issuance details such as the amount of taxable versus tax-exempt bonds needed.

There was a discussion regarding the city's bond counsel and financial advisors are covered under the city's policy and recognized as experts. They have represented the city for decades and are considered standard, reputable partners for municipal financing matters.

It was noted that bond counsel fees are not fixed but are instead calculated as a small percentage of the total loan or bond amount. Although the percentage is minor, exact costs cannot be determined until final figures are known. Based on prior similar transactions—such as a recent \$54.5 million bond—staff estimated the current bond counsel fees would likely be \$40,000 or less, with an additional pending fee of a similar amount.

The board discussed whether it might be beneficial to periodically seek competitive proposals to ensure rates remain reasonable, emphasizing the importance of prudent spending of public funds. Staff responded that bond counsel rates are already competitive, given both the specialized expertise required and the professional liability bond counsel assumes, particularly in certifying the tax-exempt status of the bonds.

It was also noted that the total projected cost for this transaction, including all professional services and closing fees, is expected to remain under \$100,000.

MOTION was made by Board Member Mendez, seconded by Vice Chairperson Ghent, to approve the ratification of the agreements with Holland & Knight and Public Resource Advisory Group.

VOTE TO THE MOTION AS FOLLOWS:

AYE: Bennett, Corbett, Ghent, Mendez, Santarlas, Greene

NAY: None

Motion carries.

3. City Commissioner

There was no Commissioner present.

4. Board Members

- **Anthony Ghent**

Vice Chairperson Ghent thanked everyone for attending today's meeting.

- **Sandy Mendez**

Board Member Mendez had nothing to report.

- **Tom Santarlas**

Board Member Santarlas asked for an update on the EV charging stations.

Executive Director Smith responded that the RFP kickoff meeting for that committee is scheduled for tomorrow.

- **Shana Bennett**

Board Member Bennett had nothing to report.

- **Jerome Corbett**

Board Member Corbett had nothing to report.

- **Cheri Kelley**

Board Member Kelley had nothing to report.

- **Gordon Greene**

Chairperson Greene excused himself from the meeting at 9:56 a.m.

NEXT MEETING

Vice Chairperson Ghent announced that the next meeting will be held on Wednesday, February 25, 2026, at 8:30 a.m.

ADJOURNMENT

With no further business to discuss, Chairperson Greene adjourned the meeting at 10:19 a.m.

CHAIRPERSON GORDON GREENE

ATTEST:

DEPUTY CITY CLERK DONNA DONALDSON

(SEAL)

CITY OF BARTOW
REVENUE & EXPENSE REPORT (UNAUDITED)
AS OF: JANUARY 31ST, 2026

111-CRA

FINANCIAL SUMMARY

% OF YEAR COMPLETED: 33.33

	CURRENT BUDGET	CURRENT PERIOD	YEAR TO DATE ACTUAL	TOTAL ENCUMBERED	BUDGET BALANCE	% YTD BUDGET
REVENUE SUMMARY						
=====						
<u>TAXES</u>						
AD VALOREM TAXES	2,730,108	563,861.00	2,425,130.06	0.00 (	304,977.94)	88.83
TOTAL TAXES	2,730,108	563,861.00	2,425,130.06	0.00 (	304,977.94)	88.83
<u>INTERGOVERNMENTAL REV.</u>						
FEDERAL GRANTS	0	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
TOTAL INTERGOVERNMENTAL REV.	0	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
<u>CHARGES FOR SERVICES</u>						
GEN. GOV. (NOT COURT REL)	0	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
TOTAL CHARGES FOR SERVICES	0	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
<u>MISCELLANEOUS REVENUE</u>						
INTEREST	0	0.00	13,099.81	0.00	13,099.81	0.00
PROPERTY RENTAL	0	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
DISP. OF FIXED ASSETS	0	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
CONTRIBUTION & DONATIONS	0	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
OTHER MISC. REVENUE	0	3,000.00	9,000.00	0.00	9,000.00	0.00
TOTAL MISCELLANEOUS REVENUE	0	3,000.00	22,099.81	0.00	22,099.81	0.00
<u>OTHER SOURCES</u>						
INSTALLMENT PURCH./LEASE	0	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
DEBT PROCEEDS	0	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
NONOPERATING SOURCES	0	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
TOTAL OTHER SOURCES	0	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
TOTAL REVENUES	2,730,108	566,861.00	2,447,229.87	0.00 (	282,878.13)	89.64
EXPENDITURE SUMMARY						
=====						
<u>ECONOMIC ENVIRONMENT</u>						
CRA	4,646,938	37,621.29	148,393.10	54,900.00	4,443,644.90	4.37
TOTAL ECONOMIC ENVIRONMENT	4,646,938	37,621.29	148,393.10	54,900.00	4,443,644.90	4.37
TOTAL EXPENDITURES	4,646,938	37,621.29	148,393.10	54,900.00	4,443,644.90	4.37
REVENUE OVER/ (UNDER) EXPENDITURES	(1,916,830)	529,239.71	2,298,836.77		4,160,766.77	

CITY OF BARTOW
REVENUE & EXPENSE REPORT (UNAUDITED)
AS OF: JANUARY 31ST, 2026

111-CRA

% OF YEAR COMPLETED: 33.33

REVENUES	CURRENT BUDGET	CURRENT PERIOD	YEAR TO DATE ACTUAL	TOTAL ENCUMBERED	BUDGET BALANCE	% YTD BUDGET
TAXES						
=====						
<u>AD VALOREM TAXES</u>						
311020-000-000 CITY TAX INCREMENT	1,304,123	563,861.00	928,755.00	0.00 (	375,368.00)	71.22
311040-000-000 COUNTY TAX INCREMENT	<u>1,425,985</u>	<u>0.00</u>	<u>1,496,375.06</u>	<u>0.00</u>	<u>70,390.06</u>	<u>104.94</u>
TOTAL AD VALOREM TAXES	2,730,108	563,861.00	2,425,130.06	0.00 (	304,977.94)	88.83
TOTAL TAXES	2,730,108	563,861.00	2,425,130.06	0.00 (	304,977.94)	88.83
INTERGOVERNMENTAL REV.						
=====						
<u>FEDERAL GRANTS</u>						
331491-000-000 FED APPROPRTN GRANT-PK GAR	0	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
331900-000-000 DEO GRANT	<u>0</u>	<u>0.00</u>	<u>0.00</u>	<u>0.00</u>	<u>0.00</u>	<u>0.00</u>
TOTAL FEDERAL GRANTS	0	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
TOTAL INTERGOVERNMENTAL REV.	0	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
CHARGES FOR SERVICES						
=====						
<u>GEN. GOV. (NOT COURT REL)</u>						
341301-000-000 FUNDING REQUEST FEE	<u>0</u>	<u>0.00</u>	<u>0.00</u>	<u>0.00</u>	<u>0.00</u>	<u>0.00</u>
TOTAL GEN. GOV. (NOT COURT REL)	0	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
TOTAL CHARGES FOR SERVICES	0	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
MISCELLANEOUS REVENUE						
=====						
<u>INTEREST</u>						
361100-003-000 INTEREST INC. - SUNTRUST	0	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
361109-000-000 INTEREST INC-BK of CENTRA	0	0.00	13,099.81	0.00	13,099.81	0.00
361110-000-000 INTEREST INCOME - ESPOSIT	0	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
361111-000-000 INTEREST INCOME - ARMSTRO	0	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
361990-000-000 NOTES RECVBL DISCT AMORTI	<u>0</u>	<u>0.00</u>	<u>0.00</u>	<u>0.00</u>	<u>0.00</u>	<u>0.00</u>
TOTAL INTEREST	0	0.00	13,099.81	0.00	13,099.81	0.00
PROPERTY RENTAL						
362000-001-000 RENTAL OF PROPERTY	<u>0</u>	<u>0.00</u>	<u>0.00</u>	<u>0.00</u>	<u>0.00</u>	<u>0.00</u>
TOTAL PROPERTY RENTAL	0	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00

CITY OF BARTOW
REVENUE & EXPENSE REPORT (UNAUDITED)
AS OF: JANUARY 31ST, 2026

111-CRA

% OF YEAR COMPLETED: 33.33

REVENUES	CURRENT BUDGET	CURRENT PERIOD	YEAR TO DATE ACTUAL	TOTAL ENCUMBERED	BUDGET BALANCE	% YTD BUDGET
<u>DISP. OF FIXED ASSETS</u>						
364000-001-000 SALE OF LAND	0	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
364000-002-000 GAIN/LOSS ON SALE OF ASSE	0	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
TOTAL DISP. OF FIXED ASSETS	0	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
<u>CONTRIBUTION & DONATIONS</u>						
366001-000-000 DONATIONS	0	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
TOTAL CONTRIBUTION & DONATIONS	0	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
<u>OTHER MISC. REVENUE</u>						
369100-000-000 MISCELLANEOUS REVENUE	0	3,000.00	9,000.00	0.00	9,000.00	0.00
TOTAL OTHER MISC. REVENUE	0	3,000.00	9,000.00	0.00	9,000.00	0.00
TOTAL MISCELLANEOUS REVENUE	0	3,000.00	22,099.81	0.00	22,099.81	0.00
<u>OTHER SOURCES</u>						
=====						
<u>INSTALLMENT PURCH./LEASE</u>						
383000-000-000 LOAN PROCEEDS	0	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
TOTAL INSTALLMENT PURCH./LEASE	0	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
<u>DEBT PROCEEDS</u>						
384000-000-000 DEBT PROCEEDS	0	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
384000-002-000 LEASE PROCEEDS	0	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
TOTAL DEBT PROCEEDS	0	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
<u>NONOPERATING SOURCES</u>						
389930-000-000 LOAN REPAYMENT (ADJ AT FY	0	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
TOTAL NONOPERATING SOURCES	0	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
TOTAL OTHER SOURCES	0	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
TOTAL REVENUE	2,730,108	566,861.00	2,447,229.87	0.00 (	282,878.13)	89.64

CITY OF BARTOW
REVENUE & EXPENSE REPORT (UNAUDITED)
AS OF: JANUARY 31ST, 2026

111-CRA

ECONOMIC ENVIRONMENT

% OF YEAR COMPLETED: 33.33

CRA

	CURRENT BUDGET	CURRENT PERIOD	YEAR TO DATE ACTUAL	TOTAL ENCUMBERED	BUDGET BALANCE	% YTD BUDGET
DEPARTMENTAL EXPENDITURES						
<u>PERSONNEL</u>						
559201-112-101 REGULAR SALARIES & WAGES	0	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
559201-114-101 OVERTIME	0	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
559201-116-000 COMPENSATED ABSENCES ACCR	0	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
559201-121-101 FICA TAXES - GENERAL	0	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
559201-122-101 RETMT CONTS-GENERAL DEF B	0	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
559201-123-103 OPEB HEALTH INS ACCRUED	0	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
TOTAL PERSONNEL	0	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
<u>OPERATING</u>						
559201-331-100 PROF SVCS - LEGAL	35,000	0.00	4,027.18	0.00	30,972.82	11.51
559201-331-300 CONSULTING SERVICES	340,000	1,800.00	28,278.39	54,900.00	256,821.61	24.46
559201-332-100 ACCOUNTING & AUDITING	7,000	0.00	1,200.00	0.00	5,800.00	17.14
559201-334-008 DEMOLITION/CODE ENFORCEME	60,000	0.00	0.00	0.00	60,000.00	0.00
559201-334-900 CONTRACT SERVICES	377,028	0.00	0.00	0.00	377,028.00	0.00
559201-334-905 COMMUNITY POLICING	113,892	0.00	0.00	0.00	113,892.00	0.00
559201-340-100 TRAVEL, TRNG & SEM - STAF	20,000	679.60	5,019.38	0.00	14,980.62	25.10
559201-340-101 TRAVEL, TRNG & SEM - BOAR	15,000	0.00	5,487.74	0.00	9,512.26	36.58
559201-341-003 CELLULAR PHONES	0	0.00	119.78	0.00	119.78	0.00
559201-341-004 TELEPHONE	2,695	89.66	464.06	0.00	2,230.94	17.22
559201-341-007 INTERNET ACCESS	0	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
559201-341-012 POSTAGE	500	0.00	23.00	0.00	477.00	4.60
559201-343-000 UTILITIES	1,019	70.12	273.46	0.00	745.54	26.84
559201-344-004 OFFICE LEASE	70,000	16,500.00	33,000.00	0.00	37,000.00	47.14
559201-345-010 INSURANCE-PROPERTY&CASUAL	5,100	0.00	2,502.24	0.00	2,597.76	49.06
559201-345-011 INSURANCE - ERRORS & OMIS	0	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
559201-346-001 MAINT - BUILDING	0	0.00	92.40	0.00	92.40	0.00
559201-346-002 MAINT - OFFICE FURN & EQU	6,000	0.00	0.00	0.00	6,000.00	0.00
559201-346-050 MAINT - MACH & EQUIP	0	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
559201-346-055 MAIN STREET CUSTODIAL PRO	80,000	0.00	0.00	0.00	80,000.00	0.00
559201-347-010 PRINTING & BINDING	2,000	873.60	1,081.10	0.00	918.90	54.06
559201-348-002 ADVERTISING	1,000	0.00	342.50	0.00	657.50	34.25
559201-348-005 MAGIC ON MAIN EXPENDITURE	0	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
559201-348-006 CRA DOWNTOWN & COMM MKTG	0	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
559201-349-001 MISC EXPENSE	30,000	255.72	2,011.34	0.00	27,988.66	6.70
559201-349-005 BAD DEBT EXPENSE	0	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
559201-349-013 PERMITTING FEES	0	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
559201-349-020 LAND DISPOSITION EXPENSE	0	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
559201-349-100 BANK CHARGES	0	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
559201-349-801 ALLOCATED CITY COMMISSION	0	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
559201-349-803 ALLOCATED CITY CLERK	20,345	0.00	0.00	0.00	20,345.00	0.00
559201-349-805 ALLOCATED HUMAN RESOURCES	3,765	0.00	0.00	0.00	3,765.00	0.00
559201-349-806 ALLOCATED PURCHASING	594	0.00	0.00	0.00	594.00	0.00
559201-349-900 OTHER CURRENT CHARGES	0	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
559201-351-001 OFFICE SUPPLIES	10,000	239.09	299.36	0.00	9,700.64	2.99
559201-352-008 CLEANING & SANIT SUPPLIES	0	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
559201-352-900 OPERATING SUPPLIES	0	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
559201-354-001 DUES & SUBSCRIPTIONS	4,000	0.00	275.00	0.00	3,725.00	6.88
TOTAL OPERATING	1,204,938	20,507.79	84,312.13	54,900.00	1,065,725.87	11.55

CITY OF BARTOW
REVENUE & EXPENSE REPORT (UNAUDITED)
AS OF: JANUARY 31ST, 2026

111-CRA

ECONOMIC ENVIRONMENT

% OF YEAR COMPLETED: 33.33

CRA

	CURRENT BUDGET	CURRENT PERIOD	YEAR TO DATE ACTUAL	TOTAL ENCUMBERED	BUDGET BALANCE	% YTD BUDGET
DEPARTMENTAL EXPENDITURES						
<u>CAPITAL</u>						
559201-661-001 LAND PURCHASE	0	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
559201-663-002 C/O MAIN STREET RECONSTRU	0	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
559201-663-003 WILSON & PARK AVE STUDIES	0	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
559201-663-005 POLK STREET UNDERPASS GTW	0	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
559201-663-006 BAKER AVE. LANDSCAPING	0	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
559201-663-008 E. CHURCH STREET CALMING	0	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
559201-663-009 CITY GATEWAYS	0	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
559201-663-012 ANTIQUE LIGHTS-CHURCH & B	0	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
559201-663-019 FLOOD MITIGATION AND DRAI	0	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
559201-663-020 SIDEWALK ENHANCEMENT	0	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
559201-663-021 SMART CITY PROGRAM	1,000	0.00	0.00	0.00	1,000.00	0.00
559201-664-001 C/O MACH & EQUIP	0	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
TOTAL CAPITAL	1,000	0.00	0.00	0.00	1,000.00	0.00
<u>DEBT SERVICE</u>						
559201-771-024 17-18 CRA MORTGAGE NOTE-P	0	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
559201-771-025 25-26 CRA MORTGAGE NOTE-P	0	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
559201-772-024 17-18 CRA MORTGAGE NOTE-I	0	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
559201-772-025 25-26 CRA MORTGAGE NOTE-I	0	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
559201-799-999 LEASE DEBT SERVICE RECLAS	0	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
TOTAL DEBT SERVICE	0	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
<u>GRANTS & AID</u>						
559201-881-005 JUNTEENTH FESTIVAL GRANT	0	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
559201-881-006 BROWN HSE / NIC	0	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
559201-881-007 WEST BARTOW HSG DEV GRANT	0	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
559201-881-008 AFFORDABLE HOUSING	0	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
559201-881-009 COMMUNITY SIGNAGE GRANT	8,000	0.00	16.99	0.00	7,983.01	0.21
559201-881-010 L B BROWN H FESTIVAL GRAN	0	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
559201-881-011 CIGAR FACTORY	0	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
559201-881-012 DOWNTOWN & COMM ECO DEV	0	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
559201-881-013 BARTOW MARKETING PARTNERS	0	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
559201-881-014 Reconstruction Incentive	0	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
559201-881-015 WEST BARTOW FRONT PORCH	0	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
559201-881-016 MAIN STREET BARTOW INC.	0	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
559201-881-017 EPAC	0	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
559201-881-018 CONDEMNED HOUSE DEMOLITIO	0	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
559201-881-019 DOWNTOWN FACADE GRANTS	0	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
559201-881-020 CODE ENFORC/DEMOLITION	0	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
559201-881-021 PARKING GARAGE FED ALLOCA	0	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
559201-881-022 TIF REBATE GRANT	0	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
559201-881-023 MANOR AT W BARTOW-ECO DEV	0	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
559201-881-024 MAIN STREET INCUBATOR	0	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
559201-881-025 HISTORIC COURTHOUSE	0	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
559201-881-026 ENERGY IMPRVMT PILOT PROG	0	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
559201-881-027 PERMIT AND IMPACT FEE ASS	60,000	0.00	0.00	0.00	60,000.00	0.00
559201-881-028 SMALL BUSINESS INCENTIVE	1,000	0.00	0.00	0.00	1,000.00	0.00
559201-881-029 COMMUNITY POLICING INNOV-	0	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00

CITY OF BARTOW
REVENUE & EXPENSE REPORT (UNAUDITED)
AS OF: JANUARY 31ST, 2026

111-CRA

ECONOMIC ENVIRONMENT

% OF YEAR COMPLETED: 33.33

CRA

DEPARTMENTAL EXPENDITURES	CURRENT BUDGET	CURRENT PERIOD	YEAR TO DATE ACTUAL	TOTAL ENCUMBERED	BUDGET BALANCE	% YTD BUDGET
559201-881-030 ARTS IN PUBLIC PLACES	50,000	0.00	0.00	0.00	50,000.00	0.00
559201-881-031 DOWNTOWN LOFT PROGRAM	0	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
559201-881-032 EASTEND COMMUNITY VISION	0	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
559201-881-033 PROPERTY ACQUISITION	1,000	0.00	0.00	0.00	1,000.00	0.00
559201-881-034 EAST BARTOW SPECIAL STUDY	0	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
559201-881-035 REHAB	0	0.00	30.77	0.00 (	30.77)	0.00
559201-881-036 WI-FI	0	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
559201-881-037 NEW DIRECTIONS/Comm Assis	0	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
559201-881-038 CHRISTMAS LIGHTS - CITY	0	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
559201-881-039 CDBG CROSSWALKS	0	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
559201-881-040 FRONTPAGE BREWERY	0	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
559201-881-041 THUNDER DEALERSHIP	0	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
559201-881-042 CHURCH STREET APARTMENTS	0	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
559201-881-043 COMMERCIAL ENHANCEMENT GR	100,000	0.00	0.00	0.00	100,000.00	0.00
559201-881-044 FACADE GRANT	100,000	0.00	0.00	0.00	100,000.00	0.00
559201-881-045 OWNER OCCUPIED REHAB	350,000	1,155.00	43,655.00	0.00	306,345.00	12.47
559201-881-046 LAND LORD ASSISTANCE	0	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
559201-881-047 INCENTIVE/CAPITAL IMPRMNT	0	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
559201-881-048 CRA PAST INCENTIVES AND G	0	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
559201-881-049 FUTURE INITIATIVES/PROJEC	100,000	15,958.50	17,146.00	0.00	82,854.00	17.15
559201-881-050 BANNER POLE PROJECT	0	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
559201-881-051 QUALITY LIFE & COMMUNITY	10,000	0.00	3,232.21	0.00	6,767.79	32.32
559201-881-052 CRA CONSTRUCTION PROJECT	2,600,000	0.00	0.00	0.00	2,600,000.00	0.00
559201-881-053 ANCHOR TENANT INCENTIVE	1,000	0.00	0.00	0.00	1,000.00	0.00
559201-881-054 DOWNPAYMENT ASSISTANCE	60,000	0.00	0.00	0.00	60,000.00	0.00
TOTAL GRANTS & AID	3,441,000	17,113.50	64,080.97	0.00	3,376,919.03	1.86
<u>INTERFUND</u>						
559201-991-001 TRSFR TO GEN FUND- DEBT S	0	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
559201-991-002 TRSFR TO TRANSP WILSON&PA	0	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
559201-991-003 TRSFR TO TRANSP CITY GATE	0	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
559201-991-004 TRSFR TO TRANSP-98 & OLD	0	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
559201-991-005 TRSFR TO WASTEWATER	0	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
559201-991-006 TRSFR TO GF-CONCEPTL BIKE	0	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
559201-991-007 TRSFR TO GF - CITY HALL A	0	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
559201-991-008 TRSFR TO GF - POLK ST UND	0	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
559201-991-009 TRSFR TO ELECTRIC FUND	0	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
559201-999-124 ALLOCATED WORKERS' COMP	0	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
559201-999-181 ALLOCATE ADM SVC TO MAIN	0	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
559201-999-506 ALLOCATED SALARIES & WAGE	0	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
559201-999-601 ALLOCATED IT SYSTEMS	0	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
TOTAL INTERFUND	0	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
TOTAL CRA	4,646,938	37,621.29	148,393.10	54,900.00	4,443,644.90	4.37
TOTAL ECONOMIC ENVIRONMENT	4,646,938	37,621.29	148,393.10	54,900.00	4,443,644.90	4.37
TOTAL EXPENDITURES	4,646,938	37,621.29	148,393.10	54,900.00	4,443,644.90	4.37
REVENUE OVER/(UNDER) EXPENDITURES	(1,916,830)	529,239.71	2,298,836.77		4,160,766.77	



GENERAL INFORMATION

Request: Review and take action to approve the Community Redevelopment Agency's, CRA, Three Year Strategic Plan for FY's 2026/2029

STAFF ANALYSIS

The purpose of this item is Review and Take Action to approve the CRA's Three-Year Strategic Planning Document for FY 2026/2029, which formalizes the Board's direction and input from January 8, 2026, CRA Strategy Workshop.

BACKGROUND

The CRA conducted a Redevelopment Plan Workshop on January 8, 2026, to align future programming, capital investments projects, targeted property acquisition, and policy initiatives with the 2026 Community Redevelopment Plan. The workshop focused on priority-setting, project types, geographic focus areas, and revisions of the CRA's 24/26 Workplan.

KEY OUTCOMES FROM THE WORKSHOP

The Board directed staff to revise the existing workplan frameworks from five action goals settings into four action-oriented priority categories. The Board emphasized that district activation and placemaking efforts are directly linked to commercial redevelopment, noting that increased foot traffic is essential to business recruitment and retention.

The four endorsed priority categories are:

- Property Acquisition & Construction
- District Activation & Placemaking
- Commercial & Public Spaces Redevelopment
- Residential Redevelopment

PRIORITY 1: Property Acquisition & Construction

- Acquisition Targets
- Development of CRA-Owned Property

PRIORITY 2: District Activation & Placemaking

- Public Spaces and Amenities
- Gateways and Wayfinding
- Programming and Activations
- Arts and Public Places

PRIORITY 3: Commercial & Public Spaces Redevelopment

- Priority Corridors
- Desired Business Types
- Support for Existing Businesses

- Regulatory Considerations

PRIORITY 4: Residential Redevelopment

- Housing Types
- Affordable Housing
- Workforce Housing
- Single Family Homes
- Housing Rehabilitation
- Veterans Housing

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends the CRA Board approve and adopt the FY 2026–2029 Three-Year Work Plan organized around the four priority categories for implementation and alignment with the 2026 CRA Redevelopment Plan. The three-year workplan will guide CRA funding priorities for initiatives, projects, incentives, and financial initiatives aimed at eliminating Blight and improving the pedestrian experience within the public realm.

Attachments

Exhibit A- 2024/2026 Workplan Document
Exhibit B- 2026/2029 Strategic Workplan
Exhibit C- Workplan Presentation



CRA Executive Director Staff Report- CRA Logo

CRA Review Date: February 25, 2026

GENERAL INFORMATION

Request: Discussion and Take Action to approve the new Community Redevelopment Agency, CRA, Logo

STAFF ANALYSIS

The purpose of this item is to approve the new CRA logo developed through a coordinated branding review that included board input and a community survey.

BACKGROUND

The Community Redevelopment Agency, CRA, initiated a branding update to develop a visual identity that reflects the CRA's evolving role as a forward looking redevelopment partner and community connector. The branding effort included professional design consultation, board input, and a community survey to ensure the new logo and visual palette align with stakeholder expectations and the CRA's long-term strategic direction.

The survey results demonstrated strong consensus across both board and community participants regarding the desired tone and positioning of the CRA brand.

Key findings from the survey include:

- The CRA brand should be distinct from the City while remaining visually connected
- A modern, progressive palette resonates most strongly with stakeholders
- Cooperation and partnership are core to the CRA's identity
- The community views the CRA as forward-looking and open
- The appropriate brand tone is professional yet approachable
- Icons that feel overly governmental or construction-focused should be avoided

These findings guided the final recommendation presented to the CRA Board at the January 28th board meeting.

BRAND DIRECTION

Based on the survey results and board discussion, the recommended brand identity includes the following elements:

Primary Color Palette

Proceed with Palette A as the primary palette. This palette presents a modern, credible, and warm aesthetic that aligns with stakeholder feedback. Elements from Palette C may be used as accent options to provide flexibility and visual variety.

Primary Icon

The recommended logo features a handshake/cooperation symbol as the lead icon. This symbol reflects consensus across both the board and community survey and reinforces the CRA's commitment to partnership, collaboration, and economic connection.

Brand Tone and Positioning

The new brand positions the CRA as:

- Forward-looking
- Open and collaborative
- Professional yet approachable

This tone supports the CRA's mission to foster redevelopment, attract investment, and strengthen relationships with residents, businesses, and partner organizations.

LOGO IMPACT

Adopting the new brand identity will:

- Establish a distinct and recognizable CRA presence
- Improve communication clarity with businesses and residents
- Strengthen the CRA's public-facing image
- Support marketing, placemaking, and redevelopment initiatives
- Align visual messaging with the CRA's strategic goals

The new logo will be implemented across official documents, signage, digital platforms, and promotional materials in phases to ensure a smooth transition.

FISCAL IMPACT

Costs associated with logo development are included within the CRA's approved marketing and branding budget. No additional budget allocation is required for approval of the logo.

STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS

Staff recommend the CRA Board approve the adoption of the new CRA logo and brand identity as presented, based on the board recommendation and community survey results.

ATTACHMENTS:

Exhibit A- SURVEY PRESENTATION

Exhibit B- LOGO PRESENTATION

Bartow CRA

Branding Survey Results

Community & Board Insights

Community Responses: 51 | Board Responses: 7

Key Findings

01

Distinct Identity Desired

75% want moderate to complete distinction from City of Bartow

02

Modern Palette Preferred

Palette A leads with a progressive, professional aesthetic

03

Cooperation is Key

Handshake icon ranks #1 for both Board and Community

04

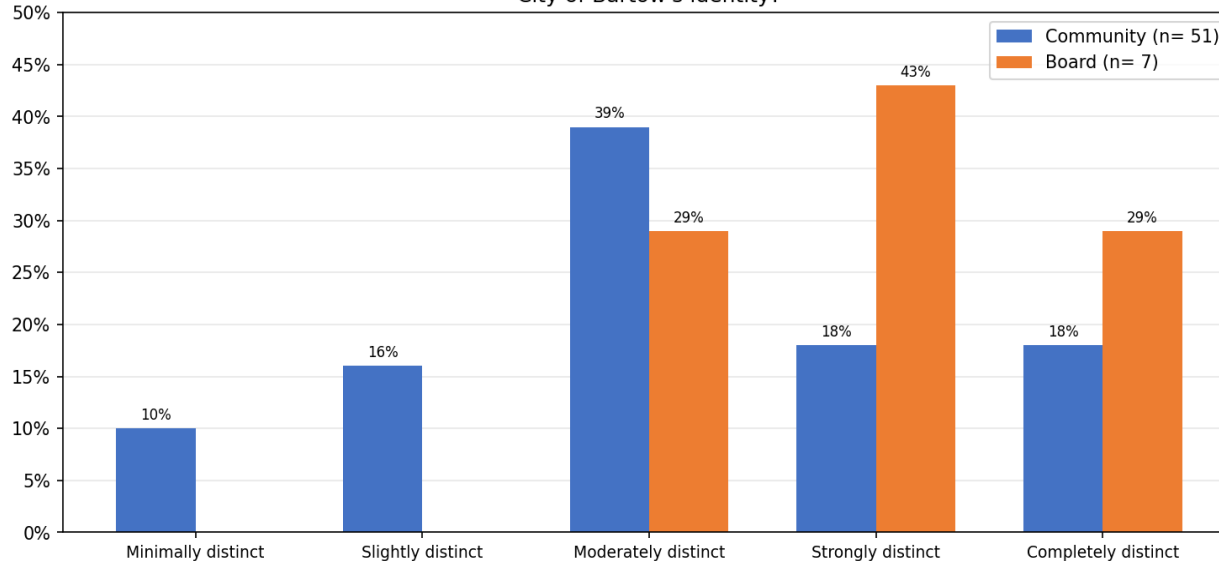
Forward-Looking Brand

66% see CRA as forward-looking; lean toward modern and bold

Identity Distinctiveness

How distinct should the Bartow CRA identity be from the City of Bartow?

Q1: How distinct should the Bartow CRA identity be from the City of Bartow's identity?



75%

want moderate to
complete distinction

*Both groups agree: the CRA
should have its own identity*

Color Palette Preferences

Community and Board both favor Palettes A and C — here are the top two:

#1 — Palette A

Avg Rank: 1.91



#112C50



#58416B



#BB5C43



#E4AB51

Heritage-Forward with Optimism

Grounded, trustworthy, civic, mature, welcoming, energetic

#2 — Palette C

Avg Rank: 2.02



#27374F



#1C8397



#96A0A9



#EE7339

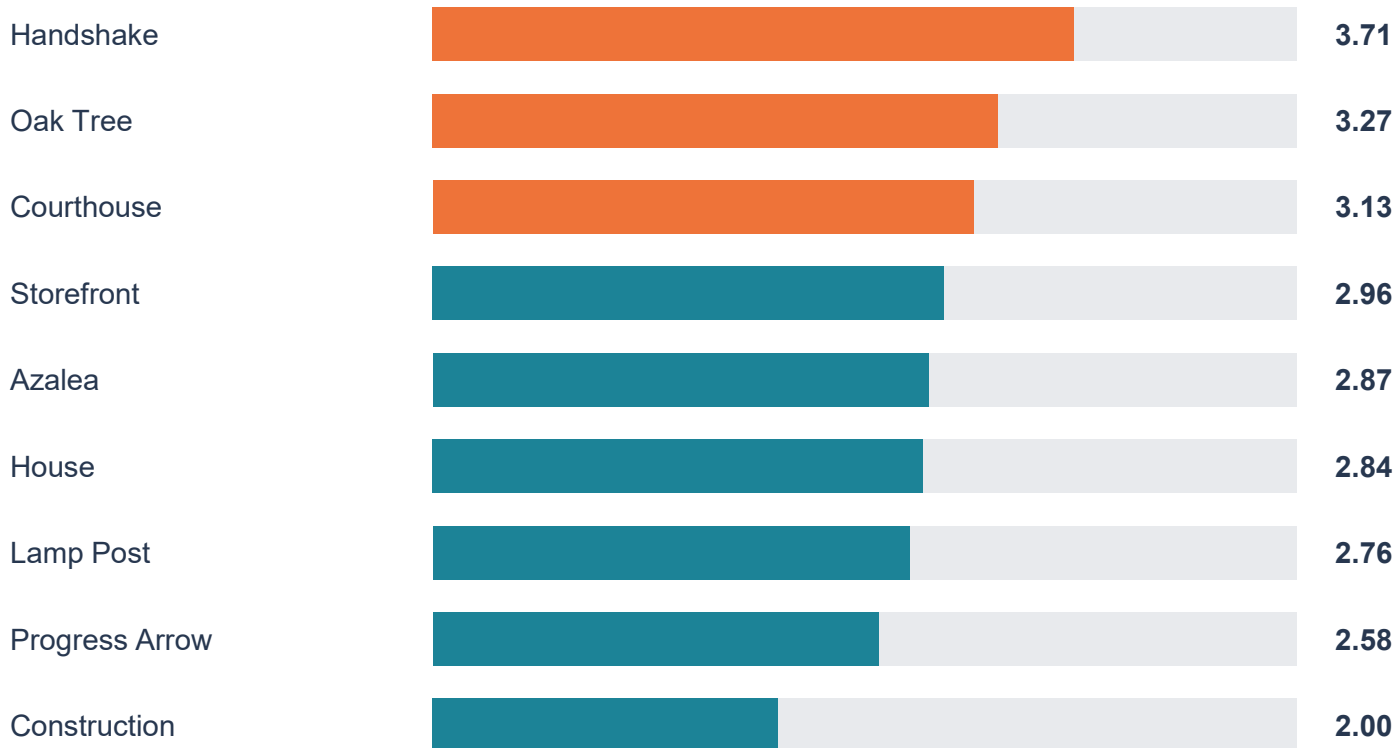
Modern & Partner-Friendly

Credible, progressive, organized, approachable, professional

Both palettes signal trust and vitality — key for civic revitalization messaging

Icon Rankings — Community

Rate how well each icon fits the Bartow CRA identity (scale 1–5)



Board Top 3

1. Handshake
(3.57)

2. House
(3.29)

3. Progress
(3.29)

Handshake wins
both groups

Brand Character

How community members describe the Bartow CRA (n=41)



Community sees CRA as forward-looking, open, and serious — a modern, professional identity

Board Style Preferences

CRA Board members rated style direction fit (scale 1–5)



Professional but Approachable

Credible yet welcoming



Friendly and Welcoming

Community-centered warmth

Tagline Styling Preference

Board prefers a slightly more expressive font for the tagline (avg rank 1.41 of 3) — adding personality while maintaining professionalism

Icon Guidance from Board

Consider for Primary Symbol

- ✓ Courthouse (2 votes)
- ✓ Handshake/Cooperation (2 votes)
- ✓ Oak Tree (1 vote)
- ✓ Azalea (1 vote)
- ✓ Upward/Progress (1 vote)

Should NOT Be Included

- X Courthouse (3 votes)
- X Storefront (2 votes)
- X Construction (2 votes)

What the Data Tells Us

- The CRA brand should be distinct from the City — but still connected
- A modern, progressive palette resonates (Palette A or C)
- Cooperation and partnership are core to the CRA's identity
- The community sees the CRA as forward-looking and open
- Professional yet approachable is the right tone
- Avoid icons that feel too governmental or construction-focused

Recommendations

Primary Palette

Proceed with Palette A — modern, credible, and warm. Use Palette C elements as accent options.

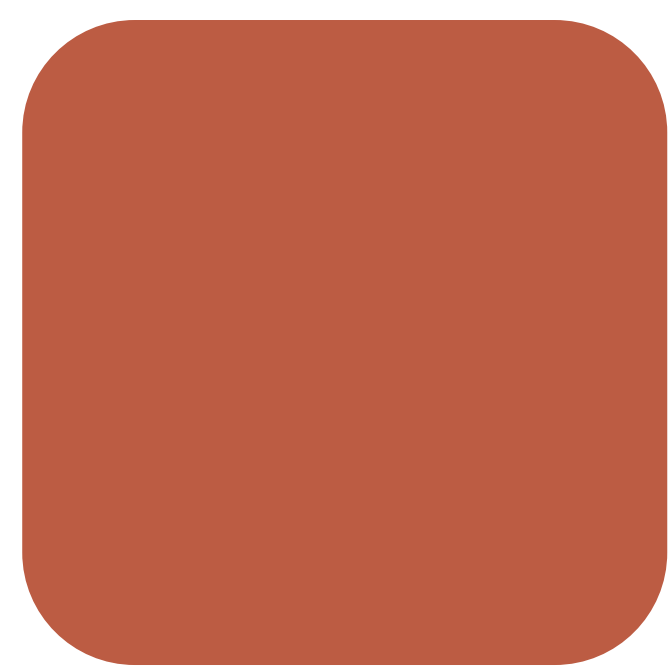
Primary Icon

Feature Handshake/Cooperation as the lead symbol — consensus across both groups.

Brand Tone

Position as forward-looking, open, and professional but approachable.

Next: Develop logo concepts incorporating these insights for Board review



BARTOW



CRA

Progress You
Can Live In





BARTOW

CRA

Progress You
Can Live In



CRA Executive Director Staff Report- Mural Project

CRA Review Date: February 25, 2026

GENERAL INFORMATION

Request: Review and Take Action to approve the Community Redevelopment Agency's Community Murals for Public Viewing Over the Branch Park and Summerlin Street.

STAFF ANALYSIS

The purpose of this item is to approve the selection of two mural designs submitted through the CRA Call to Artists process for installation of Community Murals for Public Viewing Over the Branch Park and Summerlin Street.

BACKGROUND

The CRA issued a Call to Artists to submit renderings for the exterior walls of two public restroom buildings as part of its placemaking and art in public places initiative. The intent of the project is to enhance visual appeal, activate public spaces, and promote community identity through permanent public artwork.

Artists were invited to submit renderings and proposals for one or both restroom mural projects. Submissions were reviewed based on artistic quality, relevance to the community, feasibility, and overall visual impact.

Staff received and evaluated the submitted renderings and are presenting two recommended mural selections for board consideration.

ARTIST QUALIFICATION AND MATERIALS

To ensure long-term durability and professional execution of the public murals, the selected artist(s) must have five years of demonstrated experience in large scale exterior mural projects and the ability to manage installation using appropriate equipment and industry standard materials. Artists must utilize professional grade exterior mural paints, UV-protective coatings, and sealants designed to withstand weather exposure, moisture, and sun fading.

As part of the project agreement, the artist may be required to include a touch-up or restoration fee provision if mural degradation occurs due to environmental exposure within eight (8) years or less from installation. This provision is intended to support preservation of the artwork and maintain the visual quality of the public facilities.

PROJECT ANALYSIS

The recommended mural designs reflect the goals of the CRA's public art program by transforming functional public facilities into engaging visual landmarks. The selected renderings incorporate the exterior Façade of the sites, including architectural features such as doors, outlets, and water fountain as feature elements to be included into cohesive artistic compositions.

Staff find the recommended designs to be consistent with the CRA's placemaking strategy and believe the murals will contribute positively to the character and experience of the surrounding public space.

Fiscal Impact

Funding for the mural installations is available within the CRA budget under the public art/placemaking allocation. Costs will include artist compensation, materials, and installation.

STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS

Staff recommends approval of the two mural renderings as presented and authorization to proceed with artist agreements for installation on the designated public restroom facilities.

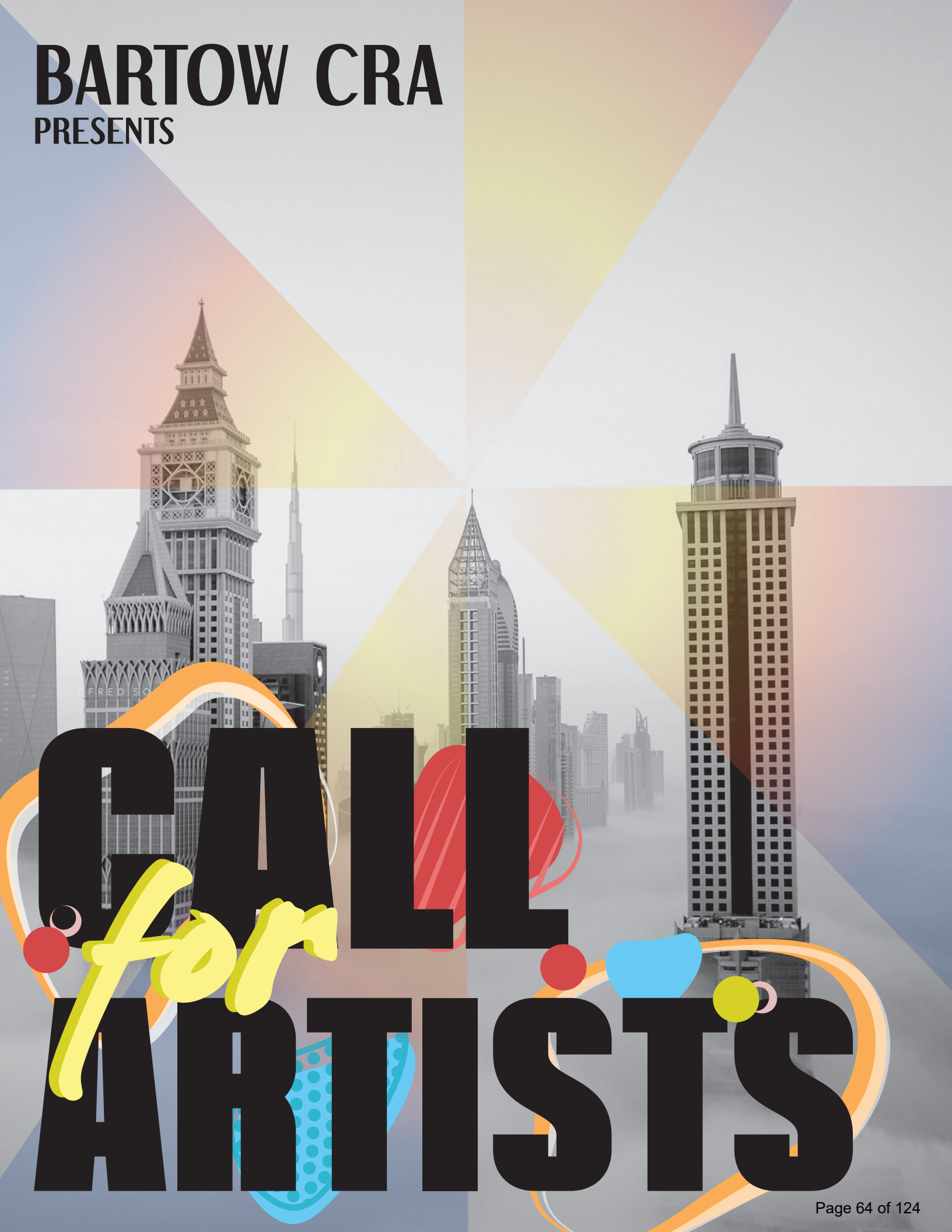
ATTACHMENTS:

Exhibit A- Renderings for Over the Branch Park Site

Exhibit B- Renderings for Summerlin Avenue Site

Exhibit C- Mural Presentation

BARTOW CRA
PRESENTS



CALL
for
ARTISTS

A CALL TO ARTISTS

The City of Bartow Community Redevelopment Agency (CRA) invites qualified artists to submit proposals for the design and installation of murals on two public restroom exterior walls, as part of the CRA's ongoing efforts to promote public art and strengthen our community identity. Artists may submit proposals for one or both projects, which will transform two ordinary spaces into vibrant landmarks for the City of Bartow and CRA Distract. The CRA reserves the right to approve all artwork displayed in the public realm for community standards.

Scope of Work

- Design and installation of original mural artwork on designated restroom exterior wall(s)
- Themes should reflect Community, History, Destination, and Vibrancy of the City of Bartow
- Durable materials suitable for exterior conditions must be used
- Artists are responsible for all materials, equipment, and installation
- See Attached Exhibits A and B
 - Exhibit A and A1- 715 W. Polk Street Bartow, FL 33830
 - Exhibit B and B1- 277 Summerlin Street Bartow, FL 33830

Eligibility

- Open to all professional artists (individuals or teams) with a minimum of 5 years of experience
- Artists from Florida's Central Counties for Pinellas, Hillsborough, Polk, Osceola, and Orange
- All mediums suitable for murals for public display will be considered

Budget

- Artists may propose a budget for one or both murals. Final award amounts will be determined based on proposals, scope, and available funding

Timeline

- Submission Deadline: 10/31/2025
- Artist Selection Announced: 12/3/2025
- Contract Finalization: 1/30/26
- Project Completion: 3/18/2026

This is a fantastic opportunity to gain visibility, contribute to community beautification, and engage with fellow creatives for three unique murals in the public realm.

How to Apply

- Submit Information to bartowcra@cityofbartow.net
- Artist bio (Resume) and Statement of Interest
- Digital Portfolio or Link of previous work (up to 5 images of previous public art preferred)
- Project description of Proposed Concept
- Contact Information (Email & Phone number)

City of Bartow Community Redevelopment Agency
980 E MAIN STREET, BARTOW, FL 33830

Gateway Restroom- Exhibit 1A

715 W. Polk Street Bartow, FL 33830

Front Facade Dimension of Building

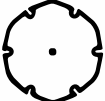
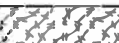
- 8'x 26' long sides
- 8' x 23' along front

The artwork must incorporate the restroom's front exterior doors and water fountain as integral parts of the mural design, ensuring the entire Façade presents a cohesive artistic composition.



GATEWAY PARK Exhibit 2A

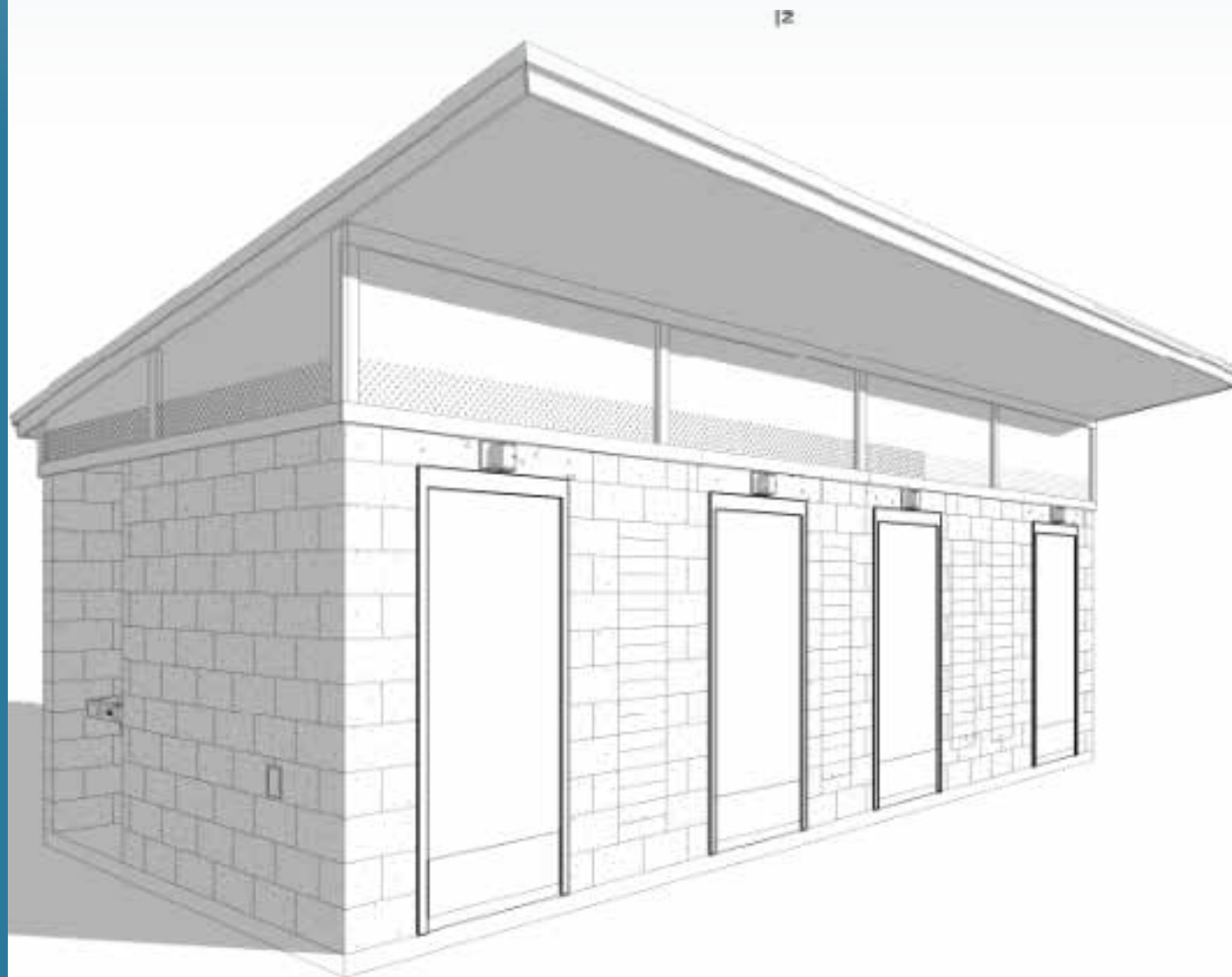
PLANT SCHEDULE

<u>SYMBOL</u>	<u>CODE</u>	<u>QTY</u>	<u>COMMON NAME</u>	<u>BOTANICAL NAME</u>	<u>CONT</u>	<u>CAL</u>	<u>SIZE</u>
<u>UNDERSTORY TREES</u>							
	LIM	6	Natchez Crape Myrtle	Lagerstroemia indica `Natchez`	100 GAL	4" CAL, STANDARD	14'-16' HT.
<u>SYMBOL</u>	<u>CODE</u>	<u>QTY</u>	<u>COMMON NAME</u>	<u>BOTANICAL NAME</u>	<u>CONT</u>	<u>SIZE</u>	<u>SPACING</u>
<u>SHRUB AREAS</u>							
	MCA	45	Pink Muhly Grass	Muhlenbergia capillaris	3 GAL.	18"-24" HT.	24" O.C.
	SB	27	Sand Cordgrass	Spartina bakeri	3 GAL.	18"-24" HT.	30" O.C.
	TF	42	Dwarf Fakahatchee	Tripsacum floridanum	3 GAL.	24"-30" HT.	30" O.C.



Downtown Restroom- Exhibit 1B

Intersection of Summerlin and Wilson Ave
277 Summerlin Street Bartow, FL 33830

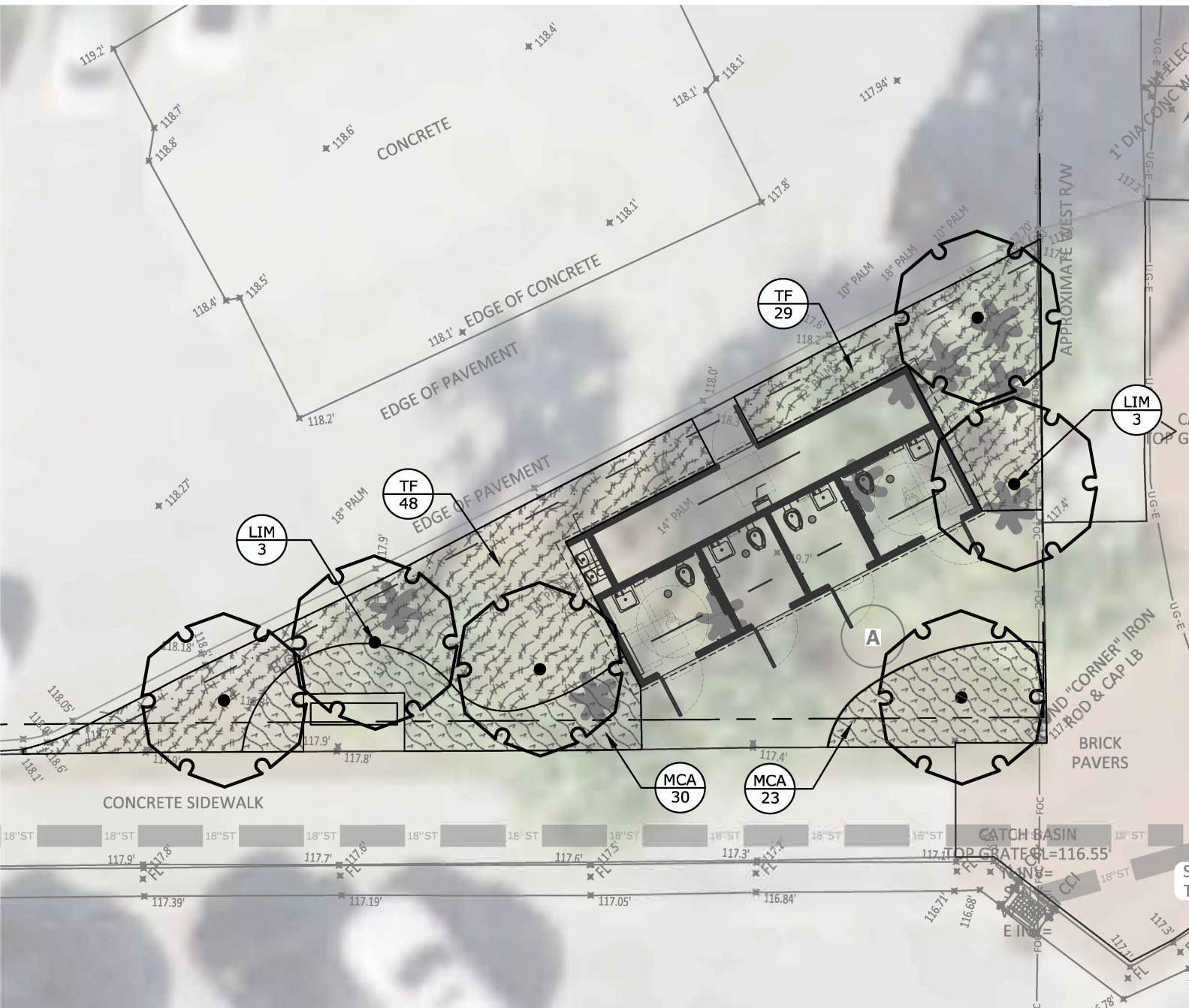


Side Facade Wall Dimension

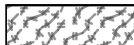
- N/E-12" x 8"
- S/W-12' x 8"

The artwork must incorporate the restroom's side exterior water fountain, electrical outlet, or doors as integral parts of the mural design, ensuring the entire Façade presents a cohesive artistic composition.

DOWNTOWN PARK Exhibit 2B



PLANT SCHEDULE

<u>SYMBOL</u>	<u>CODE</u>	<u>QTY</u>	<u>COMMON NAME</u>	<u>BOTANICAL NAME</u>	<u>CONT</u>	<u>CAL</u>	<u>SIZE</u>
<u>UNDERSTORY TREES</u>							
	LIM	6	Natchez Crape Myrtle	Lagerstroemia indica `Natchez`	100 GAL	4" CAL, STANDARD	14'-16' HT.
<u>SYMBOL</u>	<u>CODE</u>	<u>QTY</u>	<u>COMMON NAME</u>	<u>BOTANICAL NAME</u>	<u>CONT</u>	<u>SIZE</u>	<u>SPACING</u>
<u>SHRUB AREAS</u>							
	MCA	53	Pink Muhly Grass	Muhlenbergia capillaris	3 GAL.	18"-24" HT.	24" O.C.
	TF	119	Dwarf Fakahatchee	Tripsacum floridanum	3 GAL.	24"-30" HT.	30" O.C.



Bartow CRA Community Redevelopment Agency (CRA)

Mural Renderings

Wednesday, January 28, 2026



CRA- Projects, Programs, or Services

- Create Clean and Safe Places
- Prevent Crime
- Encourage Economic Development
- Build or Enhance Affordable Housing
- Fund Streetscape and other Capital Improvements
- Preserve Historic Buildings/Resources
- Retain and Recruit Business
- Enhance Parks and Recreation
- Increase the Tax Base of the CRA District
- The CRA's Mission is to Eliminate Slum & Blight



CRA Placemaking Initiative



District Activation & Placemaking



Arts & Public Places



Public Art Approach- Murals, Wrapping Utility Boxes, Street Banners
Dumpster Murals, and Temporary Art Installation in the CRA District



CRA Placemaking Initiative



Scope of Work for the Bathroom Mural Project



Themes (Murals) should reflect a Diverse Community, Honor the History of Bartow, and Vibrancy of the City of Bartow



Artists are responsible for all Materials, Equipment, and Installation

Rendering Concepts for Public Restrooms

Over the Branch Park- 715 W. Polk Street Bartow, FL 33830



Rendering Concepts for Public Restrooms

Polk Street Parks Renderings-A



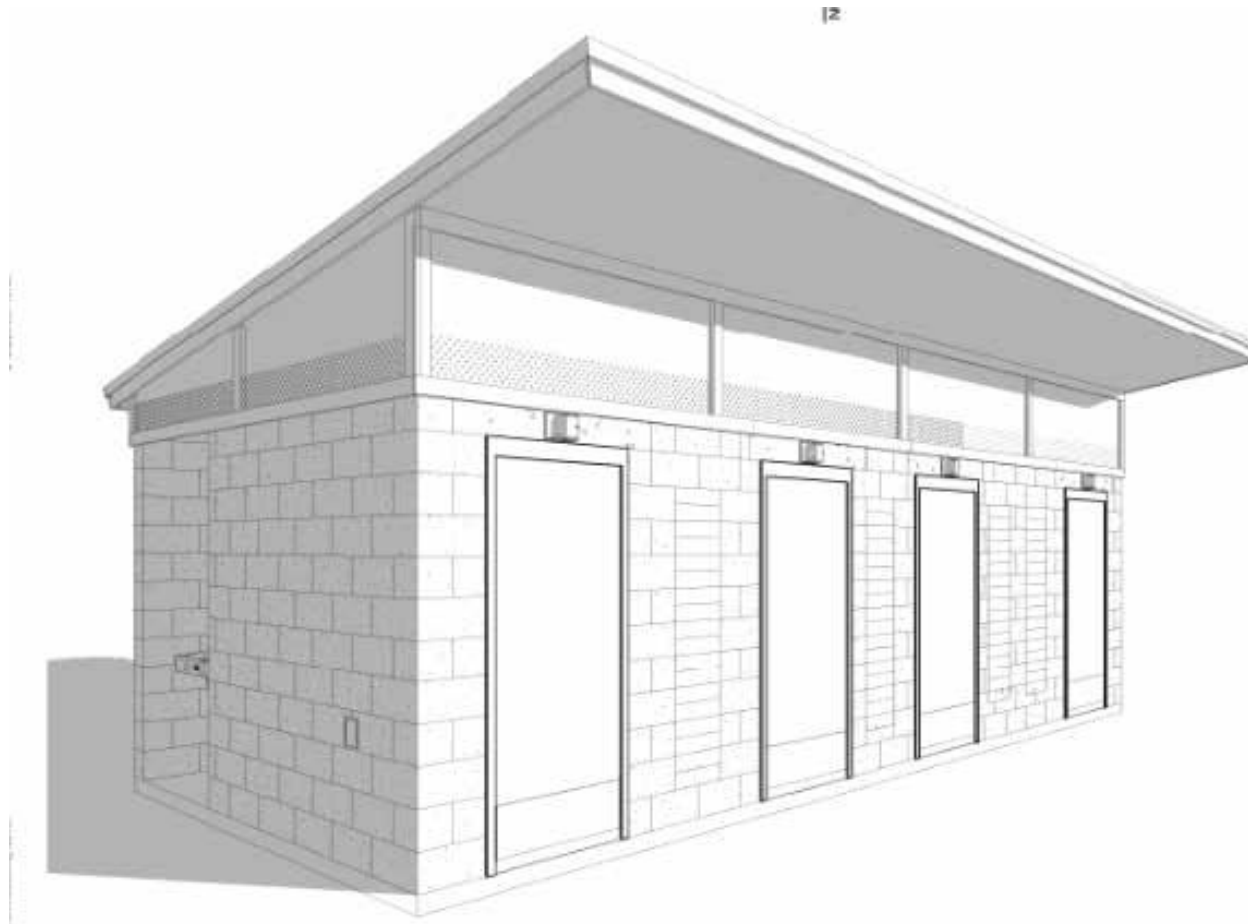
Rendering Concepts for Public Restrooms

Polk Street Parks Renderings B



Rendering Concepts for Public Restrooms

Downtown Restroom- 277 Summerlin Street Bartow, FL 33830



Rendering Concepts for Public Restrooms

Downtown Restroom Renderings- A-1



Rendering Concepts for Public Restrooms

Downtown Restroom Renderings- B-2



Rendering Concepts for Public Restrooms

Downtown Restrooms Renderings- C-3





CRA Executive Director Staff Report- Grant/Incentive Discussion

CRA Review Date: February 25, 2026

GENERAL INFORMATION

Request: Discussion on the Community Redevelopment Agency's Business Retention Grant and Incentive Programs

STAFF ANALYSIS

The purpose of this item is to initiate a policy discussion regarding the feasibility of maintaining current CRA Incentive Grants and implementing the Business Retention grant for FY 2526. Policy discussion for grants is centered around the CRA's funding limitations and to obtain direction on potential restructuring, rotation, amendment, or sunset of select incentives grants or funded initiatives.

The current incentive portfolio reflects a comprehensive approach to redevelopment; however, annually maintaining all six funded incentives and one community project simultaneously may not be financially sustainable in future years without reducing award amounts or limiting annual availability. Key considerations include:

Program Impact vs. Cost

- Some grants generate visible corridor improvements and tax base growth, while others focus on stabilization and retention. The Board may wish to evaluate which programs provide the strongest measurable redevelopment return.

Funding Rotation Model

- One alternative approach is rotating selected grants by fiscal year. This strategy would preserve program availability over time while managing annual budget exposure. Rotation could allow the CRA to prioritize capital-intensive improvements in one year and business stabilization in another.

Potential Sunset Consideration

- If funding constraints intensify, the Board may consider sunsetting one program to concentrate resources on higher-impact redevelopment tools. Any sunset decision should be guided by program usage history, measurable outcomes, and alignment with the CRA Redevelopment Plan.

Eligible Expense Amendments

- Several programs may benefit from updated eligibility criteria to reflect current construction costs, building conditions, and redevelopment needs. Amendments could increase flexibility while still maintaining fiscal safeguards.

BACKGROUND

The Community Redevelopment Agency of Bartow currently administers five active incentive grant programs intended to stimulate private investment, improve building conditions, retain businesses, and support redevelopment within the CRA district. These programs include:

- Façade Grant- Exterior Improvements to Building
- Commercial Enhancement Grant- Interior/Exterior Improvements to Unoccupied Building
- Incentive Grant- Builder Development Incentive for Impact Fees
- Owner-Occupied Grant- Weatherization Program
- Down Payment Assistance Grant- \$15,000 to \$30,000 (Builder Incentive)
- Business Tax Receipt- Covers the Cost of New BTR's for Businesses
- Banner Pole Project- Banners that Highlight Community Stakeholders (Maintenance and New Additions)
- Retention Grant- Interior Cosmetic Improvements for existing business
 - Branding/Marketing Program to Attract New Business
- Anchor Tenant Grant-

Over the past several funding cycles, demand for incentive funding has increased while available CRA revenues are projected to remain limited in future fiscal years. As redevelopment activity accelerates, the CRA must evaluate the long-term sustainability, impact, and prioritization of its incentive programs to ensure funds are aligned with redevelopment goals and financial capacity.

POLICY QUESTIONS FOR BOARD DISCUSSION

The CRA Board should consider the following:

- If funding reductions require sunseting a program, which grant should be considered for discontinuation;
- Should certain grants be placed on a fiscal rotation schedule to manage long-term funding capacity;
- Does the Board wish to amend any grant programs to adjust eligible expenses or program structure; and
- Should future funding be prioritized toward redevelopment-driven capital improvements, business retention, or owner-occupied stabilization.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

Future CRA revenues are expected to remain stable but limited relative to increasing redevelopment demand. Strategic prioritization is necessary to maintain program effectiveness without overcommitting future budgets.

STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS

This item is presented for discussion and policy direction. Staff will return with proposed program revisions based on Board guidance.

ATTACHMENTS:

Exhibit A- Program Description Commercial Enhancement Grant

Exhibit B- Program Description Façade Grant

Exhibit C- Incentive Grant

Exhibit D- Down Payment Assisant Grant

Exhibit E- Program Description Business Retention Grant



Community Redevelopment Agency Small Business Incentive Program

Program Overview

The Community Redevelopment Agency's, CRA, Small Business Incentive, SBI, Program is a proactive economic development strategy focused on supporting the health, stability, and growth of existing businesses in the Community Redevelopment District. The intention of the grant program is to help retain local business by assisting small businesses with small scale cosmetic interior improvements to their space. The SBI program works to identify and resolve minor challenges that may threaten a business's ability to remain or grow locally. The program goals foster strong relationships between businesses, local government, promote job creation, and supports capital investment by helping existing companies seize opportunities to overcome barriers for funding cosmetic enhancements for their business success, which in turn helps stimulate the local economy and improve quality of life for the City of Bartow residents and visitors.

The Small Business Incentive complies with Florida Statutes Chapter 163, Part III- Community Redevelopment

Acquire & Manage Property Statutory Reference: §163.370(1)(b), (d), (e), and (g)

- A CRA may acquire real property by purchase, lease, option, gift, grant, bequest, devise, or other lawful means to eliminate Blight. This includes air rights and property necessary to carry out a Community Redevelopment Plan for redevelopment purposes.

The Small Business Incentive Program directly promotes the goals and objectives of the Community Redevelopment Plan, specifically:

People Goals (page 2) – The communities within the CRA district area shall be a place that attracts residents, visitors, businesses, and employees in addition to enabling the development of the community and continuing to support development, particularly its entertainment destination potential an adaptive reuse of buildings. The City shall encourage vibrant and active public realms, recreation, and entertainment opportunities to support the community neighborhoods and enhance the overall aesthetics of the area, especially the entrance corridors and public realm.

Objective 1E: Maintain Street as Downtown's Main Street is valued for its historic character and pedestrian scale.

Urban Design Goal (pages 2, 6, 9, & 10) – The CRA's Downtown and North, South, East, and West Corridors will be a dynamic built environment of dense and livable patterns and active and attractive streets through quality urban design and architecture.

Objective 4D: Encourage renovation, restoration, and reuse of existing historic structures to maintain the character of the business community and neighborhoods.

The Small Business Incentive Program's main objectives are:

- Develop high quality business in Community Redevelopment Agency District Area.
- Enhance the condition and appearance of commercial buildings to eliminate Blight and Slum
- Increase commercial occupancy rates and property values.
- Promote ongoing revitalization within the district area for dining, entertainment, retail or hospitality that promotes Live, Work, Play and Shop Bartow.

Eligible participants may receive loan-to-grant funding for interior cosmetic business improvement up to a maximum of \$10,000. Loan-to-grant funding may not exceed \$10,000 and will be made available to businesses that have been in existence for a period of five (5) connective years or more with the same business names at the assigned address.

Grant funds must be used for the designated businesses that are defined in the City's Zoning code that are first floor ground level only as:

- Retail or Restaurant Business
- Social or Entertainment Business
- Personal Services Industries (e.g., Barber and Beauty Shops, Health Spas, Dance Studios, Photography and Art Studios, Tailoring, and other similar services)
- Galleries, Theaters, and other Cultural and Community gathering types of businesses

Note: Ineligible Types of Business are Management Offices, Medical, Educational, or Legal and businesses.

Ineligible Applicants/Properties

- Governmental entities and not-for-profit entities
- Adult uses as defined by the City Code.
- Home based businesses and Independent Contractors
- Business operating under a franchise brand or agreement
- Bars, lounges, clubs, or restaurants deriving more than 50% of their income from the sale of alcohol.
- Projects permitted or commenced prior to approval of an executed grant agreement by the CRA
 - Projects for building remodels /extension of the existing business area
- Business has mortgage or lease payments that are 3 months in rears or more
- Business has current unpaid code enforcement lien
- Business has current unpaid special assessment lien
- Business received CRA grant within a five-year period of the application

Funding for the Small Business Incentive Program will be budgeted annually by the CRA Board of Trustees; funding will be made available to a participant on a case-by-case basis and approved on a first-come, first-served basis.as an administrative function of the CRA board. Application submission does not guarantee approval.

A. Program Eligibility and Activities

Commercial property located in the Community Redevelopment Area is eligible for participation. Ad-valorem property tax exempt properties are not eligible (in cases where a portion of a property is tax-exempt, funding may be made only to the taxable portion/percentage of the property.) The property must be current on tax bills and without city, county or state lien.

The commercial tenant applying for the loan-to-grant funding will have written permission from the property owner to make physical changes to the property (if applicable) as part of the application process. Moreover, the applicant must have a minimum of a two (2) year lease term with a two-year renewal option from the property owner.

Eligible interior building improvements include:

- ADA building requirements first floor (second/third floors must be approved and tied directly to business services)
- Florida Fire Protection Code Requirements
- Plumbing and Electrical upgrades or repairs for improved services
- Lighting Fixtures and Accessories
- Doors (Interior) and Security Systems (only if hardwired)
- Painting (Interior)
- Flooring (Permanente) Tile, Hardwood (Glue down), or Concrete
- Equipment (fixed) related to Business Services (Must be approved in writing before Purchase)
- Furniture uniquely related to Business Services (Must be approved in writing before Purchase)
 - Excluded expenses are labor fee, fixtures, dumping fees, and Overhead and Profit fees

Please note that all necessary permits and approvals must be obtained from the City of Bartow or Polk County (if applicable) before work commences. All work is to be performed by a licensed and insured contractor; all work must comply with the Design Guidelines of the City of Bartow's Code of Ordinances and be properly permitted by the City of Bartow Planning and Building Development Services Departments.

Project Timeline

All projects must be completed within four months from the execution of a grant agreement, and all projects must be completed within the CRA's current fiscal year of funding. If a permit is required for the scope of work, it must be obtained prior to the execution of a grant agreement. The CRA Director and approval by the CRA Board are required if such circumstances cause the project timeline to exceed four (4) months from the date of execution of the grant agreement except in Acts of God. Grant extension will not exceed two (2) months for completion when approved by the CRA Board.

Application and Evaluation Process

An applicant that is interested in participating in the Business Retention Incentive Program must submit a completed application (signed), letter of interest statement of business, and resume/bio of the business services, and outline of cosmetic improvements to the space(s) to:

City of Bartow Community Redevelopment Agency
680 East Main Street, Bartow, FL 33830

Development Applications will be reviewed by the CRA for completion and compliance with the program guidelines and redevelopment objectives of the Community Redevelopment Agency.

Applications will be evaluated using the following criteria:

- Consistency with the goals of the CRA's Redevelopment Plan.
- Potential for projects to attract additional businesses and to stimulate the economy within the CRA District Area.
- Overall strength of the business plan.
- Applicants five-year track record and business experience.
- Investment level and/or source of additional funds from the applicant, if applicable.

Interior Building Improvement Costs: If a program participant seeks loan-to-grant funding for interior building improvements, he/she must provide two written costs estimates from licensed and insured contractors itemizing the scope and cost of work. The loan-to-grant funding amount will be based off the lower of the two costs estimates.

Application Documents

An applicant that is interested in participating in the Small Business Incentive program must submit an application (signed). The Application packages must include all documentation listed below. Failure to provide all required information will result in the application being denied, but a new application may be submitted, contingent on the availability of funding.

1. Copy of "active" state business registration from Florida Division of Corporations- "Active" Status and attach most recent filing as a screenshot. Failure to provide will not result in automatic rejection of the application
2. Business Financials- Individual LLCs 2024 Schedule C (Form 1040)
 - If a 2024 return is unavailable for any reason: Attach a Profit & Loss Statement for the most recent four (4) quarters available, depending on how long the business has been in operation and Receipt of Extension to File Business Income Tax (Form 7004)

3. C-Corps, S-Corps, corporate Limited Liability Corporations (LLCs) 2024 Corporation Income Tax Return (Form 1120 or 1120S), if applicable
 - If a 2024 return is unavailable for any reason: Attach a Profit & Loss Statement for the most recent four (4) quarters available, depending on how long the business has been in operation and Receipt of Extension to File Business Income Tax (Form 7004)
4. 2024 Return of Partnership Income (Form 1065), if applicable
5. Current City of Bartow's Business Tax Receipt
6. Copy of applicant's Driver's License or state id (must be legal representative of business or organization, as demonstrated on Sunbiz Filing.
7. Current City of Bartow Commercial Utility Bill statement
8. Certification of Liability Insurance (COI) – Accord form or other acceptable form showing current General Liability Insurance Policy for the business at the commercial location.
9. Current Commercial Lease Agreement with a minimum of a two (2) year lease with a two-year (2) renewal option

Disbursement of Funds

The Applicant shall incur all project costs and receive reimbursement after the project has been completed in accordance with the grant guidelines. Grant funds shall be disbursed upon receipt of a finding of project completion. The finding of project completion shall be granted once staff have received, reviewed and approved the following items:

1. Written notification that the project is complete.
2. Copies of all required permits and occupancy certificates (if applicable)
3. Copies of invoices for all improvements and evidence of payment (cancelled checks, paid receipts, or bank/credit card statements etc.).

Requests for reimbursement shall be reviewed as a single package. Once the request for payment has been submitted by invoice, The CRA shall no longer consider any additional receipts/expense. Grant funds are provided at the discretion of the CRA Director. This grant program cannot be combined with any other CRA grant program for interior and/or exterior renovations. No more than one grant may be awarded to the same property address or building unit within a 5-year period.

Program Closeout

- After five full years of operation, the entire loan is forgiven.
- CRA issues a formal grant conversion letter releasing the applicant from further repayment obligations.

Funding Disbursement: Loan-to-grant funds will be disbursed to a program participant on a reimbursement basis. The CRA and program participants will create a payment schedule to determine project milestones. Submission of receipts, invoices and documentation will be required for payment.

Annual Funding Determination

The Small Business Incentive is not a recurring, annually funded program. Funding is considered and approved by the CRA Board of Trustees on a case-by-case basis on recommendation from the CRA Executive Director.

Funding Exclusion Clause

CRA financial assistance, financial incentive awards, and project funding grants are subject to lawful appropriation and are matters of administrative discretion. Not all qualified applicants will receive financial assistance, a financial incentive award, or a funding grant. Notwithstanding anything in this program description, applicants must demonstrate to the CRA that proposed projects will meet the mission and vision of the CRA as articulated by this program description and by the CRA's Community Redevelopment Plan and will preserve and enhance the tax bases of the City of Bartow, Florida and Polk County, Florida. Applicants who have been awarded CRA financial assistance, a financial incentive award, or a funding grant in previous years, whether by self, by relative, or by corporate affiliate, regardless of time, may be deemed ineligible for funding under this program. The CRA reserves the right to deny funding for any proposed project located on the same property or redevelopment site as a previously funded CRA project. The CRA further reserves the right to require project completion within a reasonable time and to withdraw an award of financial assistance, a financial incentive award, or a funding grant in the event an awardee does not comply. This clause and these provisions are intended to ensure equitable access to CRA financial resources by prioritizing new applicants and expanding the overall impact of CRA investments within the district. All funding decisions made by the CRA are final.

Compliance Requirements

Program participants must sign an agreement with the CRA Board of Trustees that describes their rights and obligations upon issuance of the loan-to-grant award. To ensure successful project completion, the participant shall meet the following deadlines:

- Within 30 days of execution of the Loan-to-Grant Agreement, file a "Notice of Commencement" pursuant to the requirements of the City's Planning and Development Department, If applicable
- Within 4 months of execution of the Loan-to-Grant Agreement, request a "Review of Completed Work" from the City of Bartow, if applicable

Next Steps

Please complete the Small Business Incentive Program application and forward to Cheryl Baksh, Business & Community Engagement Coordinator, at cbaksh@cityofbartow.net To discuss the program in more detail, please call 863-534-0100 ex 2771.

Summer of 2026

CRA Grant and Incentive Program Descriptions

1. Incentive Grant Information

A variety of incentives for various project types that comply with federal, state, and local regulations. Ex. Affordable Housing Projects, Acquisition of Real Property, Reduce Impact Fees, Land Clearance Preparation for Redevelopment, Capital Improvement Projects for Infrastructure Streetscape and Public Park Improvements, Parking Garages, and Commercial Development Projects. Projects awarded for residential development are also subject to meeting affordable or workforce housing requirements for Average Median Income, AMI, guidelines as determined by the Department of Housing and Urban Development, www.HUD.gov. Funding for incentives is based on budget availability and will be considered on a first-come, first-served basis.

Incentives Grant Programs

A. Owner-Occupied Rehabilitation Incentive- Current homeowners to be used for repairs or improvements aimed at increasing the overall property value of their residential property. Award of \$50,000 for eligible improvements that include painting, replacing windows, doors, and shutters, repairing, or replacing steps/railings, removal of structures that are deemed unsafe, and electrical and HVAC improvements.

- Homeowner primary resident
- Property listed as a homesteader for a period of three (3) years
- Structures that have deteriorated beyond the reasonable cost of rehabilitation are not eligible for funding by the CRA.
- Grants will not be awarded for work completed prior to the execution of a grant agreement.

Private Investment Incentive-

B. Private builders or landowners undertake general redevelopment projects with the CRA.

- Build detached and attached residential homes on vacant lots
- Fund up to twenty-five percent (25%) of the total expected value of the property after improvements (payment of impact fees)
- Financial assistance offered is subject to negotiation and may be made available at the beginning of a project, incrementally during construction, or at the end of a project.

Eligibility for Incentive Grant

- Property must be located within the Community Redevelopment Area
- Property taxes must be current for property (residential or commercial)
- Property must be free from any liens (except mortgage liens), judgments, or encumbrances (except easements) of any kind, and all city/county obligations must be current

CRA Funding Determination for Incentive Grant

All applications must meet the following criteria:

- Is the proposed incentive compliant with federal, state, and local laws?
- Is the proposed incentive aligned with the Vision and Objectives for the 2021 Redevelopment Plan?
- Has the private sector attempted to implement this project without an incentive?
- What is the expected return on investment from a financial and public benefit perspective?
- Does the site/building under consideration have adequate access to public infrastructure and/or utilities to support the proposed use?

2. Commercial Façade Grant

Improve the visual appearance of commercial properties through small-scale exterior building enhancements and site improvements.

- Exterior facade renovations and/or repairs that do not exceed a total project cost of \$25,000
- 50% match towards the total project that costs \$25,000 for a maximum award of \$12,500 for reimbursement

Program Criteria

- Property must be a commercial or mixed-use property
- Applicant must be the property owner or a business tenant in the subject property
 - If the applicant is a tenant, the property owner must approve exterior renovations
- Properties must be in fair or poor condition as determined by the CRA Director
- Proof of occupancy by a lease that identifies a minimum of one-year occupancy term after execution of the grant agreement
- No more than one grant may be awarded to the same property address or building unit within a 5-year period.
 - Individual storefronts contained in one parcel will be considered eligible for funding if they have unique mailing addresses and entrances
- The subject property must have an active tenant or a tenant that will open for business once the building improvements are complete
- Existing tenants must provide proof of a lease that identifies a minimum of one year remaining in the lease term after execution of the grant agreement

Eligible Grant Expenditures

- Windows- on the front, side, and rear of buildings facing right of way
- Doors- on the front, side, and rear of buildings facing right of way
- Painting (including murals)
- Signage- New Signage Only that meets city code

- General exterior surface repairs excluding roof
- Siding Materials
- shutters, storefronts
- Minor site improvements, e.g., driveway repair, re-paving/stripping parking lot
- Demolition- removal of structures that are deemed unfit and unsafe for use
- Electrical- Exterior work directly related to exterior window lighting, security lighting, or Illumination of signage
- Awnings- installation of new awnings

Project Timeline

- Exterior renovations must be completed within four months from execution of the grant agreement
- Permits must be obtained prior to the execution of a grant agreement.

3. Commercial Enhancement Grant

Reduce commercial vacancies and improve commercial property by assisting property owners with funding to renovate spaces for occupancy for long or short-term use that generate significant pedestrian foot traffic to the CRA District. **The renovations are for first-floor ground-level improvements for the property's interior and must be vacant.**

- Exterior and Interior renovations and/or repairs that do not exceed a total project cost of \$100,000
- 50% match towards the total project that costs \$100,000 for a maximum award of \$50,000

Program Criteria

- Property must be a commercial or mixed-use property
- Applicant must be the property owner or a business tenant in the subject property
 - If the applicant is a tenant, the property owner must approve exterior renovations
- Project must have interior improvements and cannot be exterior only
- Properties must be vacant at the time of application
- Property must have an eligible business tenant(s) open for business once the building improvements are complete.
- Applicant must supply proof of a lease that identifies at least a minimum of a two-year term

Business Use

Grant funds must be used to attract the following kinds of businesses as defined in the city code:

- Retail and restaurant businesses
- Personal Services Industries (e.g., barber and beauty shops, health spas, dance studios, photography and art studios, tailoring, and other similar services)
- Galleries, theaters, and other cultural and community gathering businesses

- **Note: Management or Ex Offices, Medical, Educational, or Legal Business are excluded**

Eligible Grant Expenditures

Interior and exterior improvements to the building, that remain with the building and the site

- ADA requirements
- Window/Doors
- Interior Water Fountains
- Florida Fire Protection Code Requirements
- Mechanicals and HVAC systems
- Plumbing and Electrical, including utility connections and upgrades
- Structure stabilization (repair and replacement of foundations, footers, load-bearing walls, and roofing systems)
- Room and space reconfiguration including wall relocations
- Energy efficiency improvements
- Windows and Doors (Interior or Exterior)
- Outdoor hardscape improvements and lighting
- Signage- New Signage Only that meets city department requirements
- Painting (including murals)
- Concrete Flooring
- General exterior surface repairs excluding roof
- Siding Materials
- Minor site improvements, e.g., driveway repair, re-striping parking lot

Alternations and Maintenance

The improvements will be maintained in accordance with City policies, codes, and any other applicable requirements identified by the City, CRA, or other agencies for a period not less than five (5) years, or upon written approval by the CRA Director.

If you are interested in learning more about the CRA Incentive Programs, visit www.cityofbartow.net or contact Cheryl Baksh at cbaksh@cityofbartow.net or P. 863.534.0100 ex. 2771



INCENTIVE GRANT APPLICATION

COMMUNITY REDEVELOPMENT AGENCY

 863-534-0100 EXT.2771

 680 E MAIN STREET
BARTOW, FL 33830

 BARTOWCRA@CITYOFBARTOW.NET

INCENTIVE GRANT PROGRAM INFORMATION

PRIOR TO APPLYING FOR GRANT FUNDING, PLEASE REVIEW THE PROGRAM DESCRIPTION



Program Overview

The Community Redevelopment Agency (CRA) Incentive offers various funding incentives depending on project size and type that comply with federal, state, and local regulations. The CRA can participate in Affordable Housing Projects, Acquisition of Real Property, Reduce Impact Fees, and the Clearance and Preparation of an area for redevelopment within a CRA District. The CRA can also participate in Capital Improvement Projects. All grant awards are subject to budget availability. Projects awarded for residential development are also subject to meeting affordable or workforce housing requirements for Average Median Income, AMI, guidelines as determined by the Department of Housing and Urban Development, www.HUD.gov. Funding for incentives is based on budget availability and will be considered on a first-come, first-served basis.

Types of Programs

Owner Occupied Rehabilitation Incentive

- Funding is available to current homeowners to be used for repairs or improvements aimed at increasing the overall property value of their residential property. Eligible improvements include exterior surface repairs, painting, and replacing windows, doors, and shutters. Repairing or replacing damaged steps/railings, removal of structures that are deemed unsafe, and new electrical, HVAC improvements, and ADA compliance items.

Private Investment Incentive

- Funding is available to private builders or landowners as an incentive to undertake general redevelopment in the Community Redevelopment area. The CRA will offer an incentive to private builders and private landowners to build detached and attached residential homes on vacant lots in the defined project area. Incentives offered are custom and range in value up to twenty-five percent (25%) of the total expected value of the property after improvements.

Application Procedures & Guidelines

Businesses, organizations, or individuals interested in applying for funding can apply with supporting documentation to the CRA via email, in person, or postal mail. Applicants may be required to submit financial letters of funding, a Proforma, and/or Letters of Credit with their application. Incomplete applications will not be accepted. Rejected applications will receive the reason(s) for rejection in writing. Applicants are eligible to be approved for one incentive program per property over a five (5) year period. Applicants may not apply for funding for multiple CRA incentive programs for the same project/property address.

INCENTIVE GRANT PROGRAM APPLICATION



☐ OWNER-OCCUPIED REHAB

☐ RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT

PERSONAL INFORMATION

Name			
Address			
Email		Phone #	
Business Phone #		☐ Business Owner	
		☐ Property Owner	

PROJECT INFORMATION

Business Name			
Purpose of Project			
Address			
Property Owner (By Deed)			
Property Owner Address			
Parcel ID #			
Property in the CRA District?	☐ Yes	☐ No	

CHECK ALL THAT APPLY AND SUBMIT INFORMATION FOR A COMPLETE APPLICATION

Total Project Cost		Funding Request	
☐ Site-Project Photos	☐ Renderings-Concept Images	☐ Copy of Lease	
☐ Two Project Quotes	☐ Building Permit (If Applicable)	☐ Project Timeline	
1. Is the property free of liens/judgements (except mortgage)?		☐ Yes	☐ No
2. Has the property received a previous award from the City/CRA?		☐ Yes	☐ No

Response to questions 1 or 2:

PROPOSED PROJECT INFORMATION

3. Existing Building/Property Use: ☐ Residential ☐ Vacant Lot

4. Please provide a brief description of the proposed project:

5. If approved, the funding will be used for:

6. Is the property listed as a Homesteaded (If Applicable)? ☐ Yes ☐ No

7. Is additional financial funding available for the Project? ☐ Yes ☐ No
If 'yes,' please submit supporting financial documentation with the application for review.

8. Is the project viable without CRA funding? ☐ Yes ☐ No

9. How will CRA funding enhance the project?

The Community Redevelopment Agency (CRA) Incentive offers various funding incentives depending on project size and type that comply with federal, state, and local regulations. The CRA can participate in Affordable Housing Projects, Acquisition of Real Property, Reduce Impact Fees, and the Clearance and Preparation of an area for redevelopment within a CRA District. Projects awarded for residential development are also subject to meeting affordable or workforce housing requirements for Average Median Income, AMI, guidelines as determined by the Department of Housing and Urban Development, www.HUD.gov. Funding for incentives is based on budget availability and will be considered on a first-come, first-served basis.

By signing below, you acknowledge that you have reviewed the program description and understand its guidelines.

Applicant Signature

Date



Community Redevelopment Agency Business Tax Receipt (BTR) Program

Program Overview

The Community Redevelopment Agency's (CRA) Business Tax Receipt (BTR) is a grant initiative designed to support small businesses seeking to locate, expand, or relocate within the CRA district, specifically Downtown Bartow, MLK Boulevard, and US Highway 17. The program aims to stimulate economic growth by encouraging a diverse mix of retail, pop-up shops, small markets, and e-commerce ventures that contribute to a vibrant, pedestrian-friendly environment of the City of Bartow.

The program is a reimbursable grant, which requires eligible new business owners that pay city-mandated BTR taxes/fees assessed against the business. The program then reimburses those fees up to \$200.00 directly to the applicant. The program provides funding via reimbursement for new and expanding businesses in the city to assist in offsetting of specific City of Bartow fees.

The Bartow CRA will administer and monitor the program to ensure all eligible businesses meet program expectations. The grant program is capped at \$5,000 annually. The grant program is a first-come, first-serve program or as funding is available.

Eligible businesses include but are not limited to the downtown/entertainment district, pop-up vendor/business, a new business looking to start up, and businesses who may be looking to relocate into the CRA business districts.

Applicants must be able to obtain a City BTR. Any person pursuing trade, retail, or a commercial business that works out of their home or rents a dwelling for business purposes within the city limits. The applicant must obtain a BTR from the City of Bartow and Polk County, if applicable, prior to conducting business.

The Business Tax Receipt (BTR) Program directly promotes the goals and objectives of the [Updated 2021 Redevelopment Plan](#), specifically:

Redevelopment Goals (page 65): The Agency will be proactive in identifying policies, actions, or developments that may contribute to preventing future blighting conditions.

Objective 1A: The Agency will have the ability to collaborate with city departments, city advisory boards, residents of the area, and the City Council to incorporate architectural design standards for new construction and rehabilitation within the Redevelopment Area

Objective 2B: The Agency will have the ability to work with area economic development organizations to formulate economic development strategies for the Redevelopment Area that will ensure future economic stability and job creation.

Urban Design Goal (pages 6, 9, 10, & 24) – The CRA district will be a dynamic built environment of dense and livable patterns and active and attractive streets through quality urban design and architecture.

Objective 3B: Encourage renovation, restoration, and reuse of existing historic structures and commercial buildings to maintain the character of CRA neighborhoods.

The Business Tax Receipt program's **objectives** are as follows:

- Reduce the number of vacant or unoccupied commercial properties by developing the property to the current building and fire codes to allow occupancy
- Increase the number of commercial spaces suitable for "pop-up" uses to create new retail and cultural destinations in downtown and the CRA commercial areas
- Incentivize the attraction of new businesses that generate pedestrian foot traffic to occupy vacant spaces by reducing the costs of renovation

Program Eligibility and Activities

The Community Redevelopment Agency staff will administer the Commercial Enhancement Grant Program. Funding for this grant program is based on budget availability and will be considered on a first-come, first-served basis. Application submittal does not guarantee approval for funding. All applications will go through an approval process to determine the decision for funding. Applications that do not comply with the program criteria and conditions will not be eligible for funding.

Applicants can only apply for one grant per property address or building unit within a 5-year period. Individual storefronts are limited to one parcel and will be considered eligible for funding if they have a unique mailing address and entrance that faces a right-of-way, unless the designated business(es) is a pop-up business. Grants are limited to one grant per business.

All applications must meet the following criteria:

1. For the purpose of this grant, "small business" is considered as a business with fewer than 20 employees
2. The business must be at least 6 months old, according to the registered date with the Florida Department of State Division of Corporations
3. All business owners must obtain a City of Bartow Business Tax Receipt (BTR) prior to requesting grant funds
4. All businesses must meet the requirements of the City of Bartow Applicable Codes and Ordinances
5. The applicant(s) must be the owner(s) of the business
6. Property taxes must be current, and applicants must not have any debts owed to the City that are past due

This program relates to fees associated with the City of Bartow business tax receipts solely. All other charges from other institutions (fees unrelated to BTR fees), such as certificate of use, or the State of Florida fictitious name registration will not be considered.

- **Note: In the event that the City of Bartow, by ordinance or official action of the City Commission, discontinues or repeals the Business Tax Receipt (BTR) Services Fees, the Community Redevelopment Agency's BTR Program shall automatically terminate and be deemed sunset.**

What are Pop-ups

Pop-ups are retail spaces that are often open for a short time, usually in a temporary location. These "stores" are used in various industries such as retail, food, and crafts. They are also a great introduction into a more permanent location by allowing the business owner to "test the market". The Bartow CRA supports pop-ups and small businesses that complement our downtown district its existing permanent-structured businesses and support a forum for special projects that contribute to the local economy.

Pop-up businesses can be:

- Booths and stands at festivals
- Short-term stores for the holiday season
- Displays of items for sale utilizing another downtown business storefront or window space

- Holiday stands during seasonal activities
- Vendors at the farmer's market
- Other creative business that is not readily available in the downtown district.

Pop-ups may temporarily occupy a full-sized business space like a downtown building or monthly market, may be located inside another business, or may be in a non-traditional space like a sidewalk, trailer, or food truck. One might open a pop-up business for many reasons such as

- The local customer base is limited, so business is only needed during seasonal influx or only for a short time to sell to the local base before reaching saturation.
- Usable business space is limited, so creative forms are required.
- Existing buildings may require extensive rehab or remodeling, so testing a product or an idea before investing is encouraged.

Grant Process:

Applicant must first complete a grant application. CRA staff review the application for funding eligibility and ensure the business location is within the CRA boundaries. Once an application is determined complete and in compliance with the program guidelines, CRA staff will issue an approval letter with the award amount. Upon receipt of an award letter, the applicant will submit an invoice for reimbursement. The application form is available at www.cityofbartow.net

Application Submission and Review

1. Applications can be submitted via email, in person, or postal services. The applicant must meet with the CRA staff to discuss general guidance and project eligibility requirements. Incomplete applications will not be accepted.
2. Each application will be reviewed according to the following criteria:
 - Consistency with the goals of the Updated Downtown Redevelopment Plan
 - Ability to meet the program objectives, legal and financial requirements of the grant program

Payment Process Program Documents:

- Completed and signed application (all signature pages/sections)
- City of Bartow Business Tax Receipt, if requesting reimbursement
- A copy of each owner's State-issued driver's license or photo ID
- A copy of State of Florida business filing or DBA/ fictitious name registration (if applicable)
- Completed and Signed W9
- Internal Revenue Services- Employer Identification Numbers (EIN) documents

The Grant funds will be disbursed by the CRA to the grantee on a reimbursement basis for the eligible expense. Disbursements of grant funds are net-30 for the approved expense. CRA staff must review and approve all reimbursement requests. Applicants must submit an invoice for payment.

Next Steps

If you are interested in learning more about the Business Tax Receipt Grant Program please visit www.cityofbartow.net or contact Cheryl Baksh at cbaksh@cityofbartow.net



Community Redevelopment Agency Commercial Enhancement Grant Program

Program Overview

The Community Redevelopment Agency's (CRA) Commercial Enhancement Grant Program aims to reduce the number of vacant commercial properties and improve commercial properties by assisting property owners to support future tenants with funding to renovate a commercial space for short or long-term occupancy. The intent of the renovations to a commercial property is to generate significant pedestrian foot traffic to the CRA District and its businesses.

Grants may be awarded to property owners for interior and exterior improvements to commercial property, and the project must include interior improvements for grant approval. **The renovations are for first-floor ground-level improvements for the property's interior.** This program is intended for interior and exterior renovations that do not exceed a total project cost of \$100,000. The CRA will fund a 50% matching grant for the total cost of the project up to a maximum of \$50,000 for reimbursement. Applicants may spend more than \$100,000 on their project, however, the maximum grant amount for reimbursement will remain \$50,000. Eligible improvements can include exterior improvements for painting, signage, lighting, doors, windows, site improvements, and minor exterior repairs. Eligible interior improvements include windows, doors, standard lighting, electrical, basic HVAC, concrete floor, ADA restrooms, fountains, Interior historical restoration, and fire code improvements.

The Commercial Enhancement Grant Program directly promotes the goals and objectives of the [Updated 2021 Redevelopment Plan](#), specifically:

People Goals (page 2): The communities within the CRA district area shall be a place that attracts residents, visitors, businesses, employees and enables the development of the community, and continue to support commercial development, particularly its entertainment destination potential and adaptive reuse of buildings. The City/CRA shall encourage a vibrant and active public realm, recreation, and entertainment opportunities to support the community neighborhoods and enhance the overall aesthetics of the area, especially the entrance corridors to the city.

Objective 1A: Maintain Bartow's Main Street as Downtown's Main Street is valued for its historic character and pedestrian scale.

Urban Design Goal (pages 6, 9, 10, & 24) – The CRA district will be a dynamic built environment of dense and livable patterns and active and attractive streets through quality urban design and architecture.

Objective 2B: Encourage renovation, restoration, and reuse of existing historic structures and commercial buildings to maintain the character of CRA neighborhoods.

The Commercial Enhancement grant program's **objectives** are as follows:

- Reduce the number of vacant or unoccupied commercial properties by developing the property to the current building and fire codes to allow occupancy
- Increase the number of commercial spaces suitable for "pop-up" uses to create new retail and cultural destinations in downtown and the CRA commercial areas
- Incentivize the attraction of new businesses that generate pedestrian foot traffic to occupy vacant spaces by reducing the costs of renovation

Program Eligibility and Activities

The Community Redevelopment Agency staff will administer the Commercial Enhancement Grant Program. Funding for this grant program is based on budget availability and will be considered on a first-come, first-served basis. Application submittal does not guarantee approval for funding. All applications will go through an approval process to determine the decision for grant funding. Applications that do not comply with the program criteria and conditions will not be eligible for funding. Grants will not be awarded for work completed prior to the executed grant agreement between the CRA and the property owner. All funding decisions are final.

Applicants can only apply for one grant per property address or building unit(s) within a 5-year period and cannot be combined with any other CRA grant. Individual storefronts are limited to one parcel and will be considered eligible for funding if they have a unique mailing address and entrance that faces a right-of-way. Grants are limited to one grant per building.

All applications must meet the following criteria:

1. The subject property must be a commercial or mixed-use property located within the CRA District. The applicant must be the property owner.
2. Properties must be vacant at the time of application. The applicant must submit a scope of work with a minimum of two quotes from vendors qualified to complete the scope of work. Applicants' project must include interior improvements, applications for exterior improvements will not be accepted. Grant and subsequent matching funds can only be used toward eligible expenses. The total project costs are determined by the total costs of eligible grant expenses. The maximum grant amount for a 50% match towards the total project costs is \$50,000, which requires a project cost of \$100,000. Applicants may spend more than \$100,000, however, the maximum grant amount will remain \$50,000.
3. The subject property must have an eligible business tenant(s) that will open the business once the building improvements are complete. Applicants must supply proof of a lease that identifies at least a minimum of a two-year term once the renovations are completed. If the applicant anticipates a "pop-up" use that has a shorter lease term, the applicant must show how the building will remain occupied and in use for at least two years consistently. The property owners' tenants must possess a current City of Bartow Business Tax Receipt or obtain a City of Bartow Business Tax Receipt within 60 days of the execution of a lease.
4. Grant funds must be used to attract businesses as defined in the Downtown Zoning code:
 - Retail Business or Restaurant Business
 - Personal Services Industries (e.g., barber and beauty shops, health spas, dance studios, photography and art studios, tailoring, and other similar services)
 - Galleries, theaters, and other cultural and community gathering types of businesses
 - **Note: Management Offices, Medical, Educational, or Legal Business are excluded**
5. Prior to the execution of a grant agreement, the subject property must be free from any liens (except mortgage liens), judgments, or encumbrances (except easements) of any kind, and all city obligations must be current.

Eligible Grant Expenditures

Grant funds must be used to make interior or exterior improvements to the building, that remain with the building and the site that reduce visual Blight and prepare the building for future occupancy. The CRA's general rule for improvements that qualify toward the applicant's match is that the improvement should remain with the property. Eligible interior and exterior building improvements include:

- ADA requirements (Interior & Exterior)
- Window/Doors (Interior)
- Interior Water Fountains
- Florida Fire Protection Code Requirements
- Mechanical and HVAC systems
- Plumbing and Electrical, including utility connections and upgrades
- Structure stabilization (repair and replacement of foundations, footers, and load-bearing walls)
- Room and space reconfiguration including wall relocations
- Energy efficiency improvements
- Windows and Doors (Exterior)
- Outdoor hardscape improvements and lighting
- Signage- New Signage only that meets city code requirements
- Painting (including murals)
- Flooring (Permanente) Tile, Hardwood (Glue down), or Concrete
- General exterior Facade surface repairs or enhancements excluding roofs
- Siding Materials
- Minor site improvements, e.g., driveway repair and re-stripping parking lot
 - Excluded expenses are labor fee, fixtures, dumping fees, and equipment are all ineligible expenses.

Grant Process:

Property owners must first complete a grant application and submit all documents to review and the applications. If the project requires a permit, all permits will need to be submitted with application for review and approval.

CRA staff reviews the application for funding eligibility. Once an application is determined to be complete and in compliance with the grant program, CRA staff will execute a grant agreement with applicable parties that outlines the approved funding amount (grant funding amount will be based on the lower of the two cost estimates), total project costs, project timeline, and scope of work. The application form is available at www.cityofbartow.net

Application Submission and Review

1. Applications can be submitted via email, in person, or postal services. The applicant must meet with the CRA staff to discuss general guidance and project eligibility requirements. Incomplete applications will not be accepted.
2. Each application will be reviewed according to the following criteria:
 - Consistency with the goals of the Updated Downtown Redevelopment Plan

- Feasibility of the proposed scope of services and timeline
- Ability to meet the program objectives, legal and financial requirements of the grant program
- If the application is approved, the applicant shall sign and complete a funding agreement. After the funding agreement has been executed, the applicant may begin work on the project
- Two written cost estimates from licensed and insured contractors itemizing the scope and the costs of work for eligible improvements

Project Timeline

If a permit is required for the scope of work, it must be obtained prior to the execution of a grant agreement. Any work requiring a permit must be performed by a licensed and insured contractor and comply with the Redevelopment Design Guidelines and the City of Bartow Code of Ordinances. All renovations must be completed within one year of the execution of the grant agreement. The CRA Director and approval by the CRA Board are required if such circumstances cause the project timeline to exceed one year from the date of execution of the grant agreement.

Alternations and Maintenance

The improvements will be maintained in accordance with City policies, codes, and any other applicable requirements identified by the City of Bartow, CRA, or other agencies for a period not less than five (5) years, or upon written approval by the CRA Director.

Payment Process

The Grant funds will be disbursed by the CRA to the grantee upon completion of the project on a reimbursement basis for eligible project expenses. Disbursements for matching grants will be issued at the match rate multiplied by the balance of each paid invoice/expense submitted. CRA staff must review and approve all reimbursement requests. Applicants must submit an itemized list of expenses and an invoice for payment with proof expenses were incurred. Reimbursement of an expense(s) for work completed prior to the executed grant agreement is not reimbursable. The CRA Director has the authority to extend time limits for project completion based on extenuating circumstances. The CRA Director has the authority to modify the payment process based on extenuating circumstances. The finding of project completion will be granted when the CRA has received the following package:

1. Written notification that the project is complete along with a signed W9 form (irs.gov/form-w-9)
2. Copies of all required permits and occupancy certificates.
3. Copies of canceled checks, certified checks, or money orders of project costs, or credit card statements of project costs for:
 - Detailed invoices and paid receipts signed, dated, and marked paid in full
 - Name, address, telephone, and a unique invoice number, etc
 - Photographs of the project (before and after photos)
4. The CRA disburses funds to grant recipients within 30 days of an approved and completed reimbursement invoice
5. Once a reimbursement check has been issued, no further documents will be considered.

Funding Exclusion Clause

CRA financial assistance, financial incentive awards, and project funding grants are subject to lawful appropriation and are matters of administrative discretion. Not all qualified applicants will receive financial assistance, a financial incentive award, or a funding grant. Notwithstanding anything in this program description, applicants must demonstrate to the CRA that proposed projects will meet the mission and vision of the CRA as articulated by this program description and by the CRA's Community Redevelopment Plan and will preserve and enhance the tax bases of the City of Bartow, Florida and Polk County, Florida. Applicants who have been awarded CRA financial assistance, a financial incentive award, or a funding grant in previous years, whether by self, by relative, or by corporate affiliate, regardless of time, may be deemed ineligible for funding under this program. The CRA reserves the right to deny funding for any proposed project located on the same property or redevelopment site as a previously funded CRA project. The CRA further reserves the right to require project completion

within a reasonable time and to withdraw an award of financial assistance, a financial incentive award, or a funding grant in the event an awardee does not comply. This clause and these provisions are intended to ensure equitable access to CRA financial resources by prioritizing new applicants and expanding the overall impact of CRA investments within the district. All funding decisions made by the CRA are final.

Next Steps

If you are interested in learning more about the Commercial Enhancement Grant Program please visit www.cityofbartow.net or contact Cheryl Baksh at cbaksh@cityofbartow.net



City of Bartow Community Redevelopment Agency Commercial Facade Grant Program

Program Overview

The Community Redevelopment Agency's (CRA) Commercial Facade grant program aims to improve commercial properties' visual appearance through small-scale exterior building enhancements and site improvements. Grants may be awarded to property owners or tenants for exterior improvements to a commercial property within the CRA district. This program is intended for exterior facade renovations and/or repairs that do not exceed a total project cost of \$25,000. The CRA will fund a 50% matching grant toward the total cost of the project up to a maximum of \$12,500. Applicants may spend more than \$25,000, however, the maximum grant amount will remain at \$12,500.

Grants may be awarded to property owners or tenants for exterior improvements to commercial property within the CRA district. Eligible improvements include painting, signage, lighting, doors, windows, site improvements, and other minor exterior repairs listed under Eligible Grant Expenditures. All exterior improvements must be approved by the CRA Director ex. Paint Color, Mural Designs, type of awning materials etc...

The Commercial Facade Grant Program directly promotes the goals and objectives of the [Updated 2021 Redevelopment Plan](#), specifically:

People Goals (page 2) – The communities within the CRA district area shall be a place that attracts residents, visitors, businesses, and employees in addition to enabling the development of the community and continuing to support development, particularly its entertainment destination potential and adaptive reuse of buildings. The City shall encourage vibrant and active public realms, recreation, and entertainment opportunities to support the community neighborhoods and enhance the overall aesthetics of the area, especially the entrance corridors and public realm.

Objective 1E: Maintain Street as Downtown's Main Street is valued for its historic character and pedestrian scale.

Urban Design Goal (pages 2, 6, 9, & 10) – The CRA's Downtown and North, South, East, and West Corridors will be a dynamic built environment of dense and livable patterns and active and attractive streets through quality urban design and architecture.

Objective 4D: Encourage renovation, restoration, and reuse of existing historic structures to maintain the character of the business community and neighborhoods.

The Commercial Facade Grant Program's **Objectives** are:

- Restoration and Improvement of the condition and appearance of historical commercial buildings in the Community Redevelopment District area.
- Increase the number of commercial properties that can attract and accommodate tenants in the CRA District.
- Increase commercial occupancy rates and property values by removing blighted and vacant structures.
- Increase walkability by providing a healthy and "Walkable area with public art, entertainment opportunities, and recreations.

Program Eligibility and Activities

The Community Redevelopment Agency staff will administer the Commercial Facade grant program and will be accepted on a rolling basis. Funding for this grant program is based on budget availability and will be considered on a first-come, first-served basis. Application submission does not guarantee approval. Applications will be reviewed for completeness and compliance with program criteria to determine eligibility for grant funding. Applications that do not comply with the program criteria and conditions will not be eligible for funding. No grants will be awarded for work completed prior to an executed grant agreement. The funding decision of CRA staff is final. This grant program cannot be combined with any other CRA grant program for interior and/or exterior renovations. No more than one grant may be awarded to the same property address or building unit within a 5-year period. Individual storefronts contained in one parcel will be considered eligible for funding if they have unique mailing addresses and entrances.

All applications must meet the following criteria:

1. The subject property must be a commercial or mixed-use property located within the CRA District area (See Map). The applicant can be the property owner or a business tenant in the subject property. Existing business tenants or property owners must possess a current city of Bartow Business Tax Receipt. New business owners must obtain a City of Bartow Business Tax Receipt within 60 days of grant agreement execution.
2. Properties must be in fair or poor condition as determined by the CRA Director for application approval. The applicant must submit images of the proposed improvements and scope of work with a minimum of two quotes from qualified vendors for completing the work. The total project cost is determined by the total costs of eligible grant expenses. Grant funds can only be used toward eligible expenses. Matching funds must be used towards eligible expenses. The maximum grant matching amount per application is \$12,500, which requires a minimum of \$25,000 in total project costs.
3. The subject property must have an active tenant or a tenant that will open for business once the building improvements are complete. Applicants must supply proof of a lease that identifies at least a minimum of a one-year term or a plan to be approved for occupancy for a year from the time building improvements are complete. Existing tenants must provide proof of a lease that identifies a minimum of one year remaining in the lease term after execution of the grant agreement.
4. Prior to the execution of a grant agreement, the subject property must be free from any liens (except mortgage liens), judgments, or encumbrances (except easements) of any kind, and all city/county obligations must be current.

Eligible Grant Expenditures

Grant funds must be used to make exterior improvements to the building and the site that reduce visual Blight and improve the appearance of the exterior property. Eligible properties must demonstrate exterior conditions rated as poor or fair, as determined by the CRA Executive Director, to qualify for program approval. Eligible exterior building improvements include:

- Windows- on the front, side, and rear of buildings that face the right of way
- Doors- on the front, side, and rear of building that face the Right of Way
- Painting (including murals)
- Signage- New Signage Only that meets city code
- General exterior surface repairs **excluding a roof**
- Siding Materials
- Shutters for storefronts
- Minor site improvements, e.g., driveway or parking lot repair, re-paving/stripping parking lot
- Demolition- removal of structures that are deemed unfit and unsafe for use
- Electrical- Exterior work directly related to exterior window lighting, security lighting or Illumination of signage.
- Awnings- installation of new awnings
 - **Excluded expenses are labor fees, fixtures, dumping fees, and equipment are all ineligible expenses.**

Eligible Properties

All properties for grant approval must be located within the CRA District and demonstrate exterior conditions rated as poor or fair, as determined by the CRA Executive Director, to qualify for program approval. All decisions for approval are final.

Grant Process:

Property owners or tenants must submit a complete grant application. If the applicant is a tenant, the property owner will be required to authorize exterior renovations in writing via a notarized letter. CRA staff will review the application for funding eligibility. Once an application is complete and in compliance with the grant program, CRA staff will provide a letter of approval and schedule an application and program review meeting to execute a grant agreement outlining the approved funding amount, total project costs, project timeline, and scope of work. The application form is available at www.cityofbartow.net.

Funding Exclusion Clause

CRA financial assistance, financial incentive awards, and project funding grants are subject to lawful appropriation and are matters of administrative discretion. Not all qualified applicants will receive financial assistance, a financial incentive award, or a funding grant. Notwithstanding anything in this program description, applicants must demonstrate to the CRA that proposed projects will meet the mission and vision of the CRA as articulated by this program description and by the CRA's Community Redevelopment Plan and will preserve and enhance the tax bases of the City of Bartow, Florida and Polk County, Florida. Applicants who have been awarded CRA financial assistance, a financial incentive award, or a funding grant in previous years, whether by self, by relative, or by corporate affiliate, regardless of time, may be deemed ineligible for funding under this program. The CRA reserves the right to deny funding for any proposed project located on the same property or redevelopment site as a previously funded CRA project. The CRA further reserves the right to require project completion within a reasonable time and to withdraw an award of financial assistance, a financial incentive award, or a funding grant in the event an awardee does not comply. This clause and these provisions are intended to ensure equitable access to CRA financial resources by prioritizing new applicants and expanding the overall impact of CRA investments within the district. All funding decisions made by the CRA are final.

Application Submission

1. Applications can be submitted via email, in person, or postal services. The applicant must meet with the CRA staff. Staff will provide the applicant with general guidance on the proposed project and if the project qualifies grant funds for submission. Incomplete applications will not be accepted and will be returned to the applicant within two weeks of review.
2. Each application will be reviewed according to the following criteria:
 - Consistency with the goals of the CRA's Redevelopment Plan
 - Feasibility of the proposed scope of services and timeline of the project for completion
 - Ability to meet the program objectives, legal and financial requirements of the grant program
 - Improves the property values and encourages redevelopment of existing properties.
3. If the application is, conditionally, approved by the CRA Director, the applicant shall sign and complete a funding agreement. After the funding agreement has been executed, the applicant may begin work on the project.

Project Timeline

Exterior renovations must be completed within four months from execution of the grant agreement. For scopes of work that require a permit, permits must be obtained prior to the execution of a grant agreement. The CRA Director and approval by the CRA Board are required if such circumstances cause the project timeline is to exceed four months from the date of execution of the grant agreement.

Payment Process

The Grant funds will be disbursed by the CRA to the grantee, or to the grantee's contracted vendor, upon completion of the

project on a reimbursement basis for eligible project expenses. Disbursements for matching grants will be issued at the match rate multiplied by the balance of each paid invoice/expense submitted. Applicants must submit an itemized list of expenses and an invoice for payment with proof expenses were incurred. The CRA Director has the authority to modify the payment process based on extenuating circumstances. CRA staff must review and approve all reimbursement requests. The finding of project completion will be granted when the CRA has received the following package:

1. Written notification that the project is complete along with a signed W9 form ([irs.gov/-form-w-9](https://irs.gov/form-w-9))
2. Copies of all required permits and occupancy certificates (if applicable)
3. Copies of canceled checks, certified checks or money orders of project costs, or credit card statements of project cost;
 - Detailed invoices and paid receipts signed, dated, and marked “paid in full;”
 - Name, address, telephone, and a unique invoice number etc.
 - Photographs of the project (before and after photos)
4. The CRA disburses funds to grant recipients within 30 days of an approved and completed invoice.
5. Once a reimbursement check has been issued, no further documents will be considered.

Next Steps

If you are interested in learning more about the Commercial Facade Grant Program contact Cheryl Baksh at cbaksh@cityofbartow.net



Community Redevelopment Agency Anchor Tenant Incentive Program

Program Overview

The Community Redevelopment Agency's Anchor Tenant Incentive Program provides loan-to-grant funding to commercial property owners and/or commercial tenants to assist with interior building improvements and business start-up costs. The goal of the program is primarily to incentivize an anchor business (food, drink, retail, entertainment, or hospitality establishment) to open within the CRA District Area, which in turn will help stimulate the local economy and improve quality of life for The City of Bartow residents and visitors. The business must provide a service that doesn't currently exist within the CRA district area.

The Anchor Tenant Incentive complies with Florida Statutes Chapter 163, Part III- Community Redevelopment- Acquire & Manage Property Statutory Reference: §163.370(1)(b), (d), (e), and (g)

- A CRA may acquire real property by purchase, lease, option, gift, grant, bequest, devise, or other lawful means to eliminate Blight. This includes air rights and property necessary to carry out a Community Redevelopment Plan for redevelopment purposes.

The Anchor Tenant Incentive Program directly promotes the goals and objectives of the Community Redevelopment Plan, specifically:

People Goals (page 2) – The communities within the CRA district area shall be a place that attracts residents, visitors, businesses, and employees in addition to enabling the development of the community and continuing to support development, particularly its entertainment destination potential and adaptive reuse of buildings. The City shall encourage vibrant and active public realms, recreation, and entertainment opportunities to support the community neighborhoods and enhance the overall aesthetics of the area, especially the entrance corridors and public realm.

Objective 1E: Maintain Street as Downtown's Main Street is valued for its historic character and pedestrian scale.

Urban Design Goal (pages 2, 6, 9, & 10) – The CRA's Downtown and North, South, East, and West Corridors will be a dynamic built environment of dense and livable patterns and active and attractive streets through quality urban design and architecture.

Objective 4D: Encourage renovation, restoration, and reuse of existing historic structures to maintain the character of the business community and neighborhoods.

The Anchor Tenant Incentive Program's main objectives are as follows:

- Attract **high quality business** to the Community Redevelopment Agency District Area.
- Improve the condition and appearance of commercial buildings within the CRA District Area.
- Increase commercial occupancy rates and property values.
- Promote ongoing revitalization within the district area for dining, entertainment, retail or hospitality that promotes Live, Work, Play and Shop Bartow.

Eligible participants may receive loan-to-grant funding for 35% of the total interior building improvement and business start-up cost, up to a maximum of \$250,000. Loan-to-grant funding may not exceed \$250,000 and be made available to businesses to attract a food, drink, retail, entertainment, or hospitality establishment by presenting the CRA with a unique 'catalyst' project. A catalyst project is generally defined as a business that is first-to-market and anticipated to have a catalytic impact that will promote the Redevelopment Plan's vision for a thriving district where people can Live, Work, Play and Shop in Bartow's CRA

district area. Funding for the Anchor Tenant Incentive Program will be budgeted annually by the CRA Board of Trustees; funding will be made available to a participant on a case-by-case basis after review by and approval from the CRA Board of Trustees.

Grant funds must be used to attract businesses as defined in the City's Zoning code:

- Retail Business or Restaurant Business
- Personal Services Industries (e.g., barber and beauty shops, health spas, dance studios, photography and art studios, tailoring, and other similar services)
- Galleries, theaters, and other cultural and community gathering types of businesses
 - **Note: Management Offices, Medical, Educational, or Legal Business are excluded**

Program Eligibility and Activities

Commercial property located in the Community Redevelopment Area is eligible for participation. Ad-valorem property tax exempt properties are not eligible (in cases where a portion of a property is tax-exempt, funding may be made only to the taxable portion/percentage of the property.) The property must be current on tax bills and without city, county or state lien. If a commercial tenant is applying for loan-to-grant funding, written permission from the property owner must be obtained as part of the application process. Moreover, the tenant must have a minimum five (5) year lease term with the property owner. Application submission does not guarantee approval.

Eligible Activities: The CRA will provide funding for interior building improvements as well as business start-up costs.

Eligible interior building improvements include:

- ADA building requirements first floor (second/ third floors must be approved and tied directly to business services)
- Florida Fire Protection Code Requirements
- Mechanical and HVAC systems
- Plumbing and electrical upgrades or repairs
- Structure stabilization (repair and replacement of foundations, footers, load bearing walls)
- Room and space reconfiguration including wall relocations
- Energy efficiency improvements
- Windows- that face the right of way
- Doors (Interior)
- Painting (Interior)
- Flooring (Permanente) Tile, Hardwood (Glue down), or Concrete
- Signage- New Signage only that meets city code requirements
- Unique Equipment related to Business Services (Must be approved in writing before Purchase)
- Unique Furniture related to Business Services (Must be approved in writing before Purchase)
 - Excluded expenses are labor fee, fixtures, dumping fees, and equipment are all ineligible expenses

Please note that all necessary permits and approvals must be obtained from the City of Bartow or Polk County (if applicable) before work commences. All work is to be performed by a licensed and insured contractor; all work must comply with the Design Guidelines of the City of Bartow's Code of Ordinances and be properly permitted by the City of Bartow Planning and Building Development Services Departments. This grant program cannot be combined with any other CRA grant program for interior and/or exterior renovations. No more than one grant may be awarded to the same property address or building unit within a 5-year period.

Eligible business start-up costs include:

Hard Start Up Cost

- Furniture, fixtures, and unique equipment approved prior to purchase
- Business registration and incorporation fees
 - Licenses and permits (local, state, professional)
 - Zoning and inspection fees

Soft Start Up Cost

- Logo and graphic design (menus, signage, and business marketing items)
- Business cards, signage, flyers, brochures
- Advertising (online ads, social media, local newspapers, radio, etc.)

Program Funding Payment Cycle

1. Application & Approval

- Applicants submit complete program application and project budget.
- CRA reviews eligibility, project scope, proforma, and total project costs.
- Funding award is determined:
 - 35% of project costs up to \$200,000.
 - For catalyst projects, up to an additional \$50,000 may be awarded for unique equipment.
- Funding agreement is executed outlining repayment and forgiveness terms.

2. Disbursement of Funds

- Funds are released on a reimbursement basis based on approved funding cycle:
 - Applicant must provide paid invoices/receipts and proof of payment.
 - CRA reimburses approved expenses within 30 days of submission (on-going)
- Multiple disbursement requests may be submitted as project progresses.
- Final reimbursement occurs only after issuance of a Certificate of Occupancy (CO) or equivalent project completion certification.

3. Loan Term & Forgiveness Period

- The loan term officially begins at the issuance of the CO.
- The loan is 0% interest and structured for a five (5) year term.
- Forgiveness schedule:
 - Year 1: 20% of the principal is forgiven if the business remains open and operational.
 - Year 2: Additional 20% forgiven.
 - Year 3: Additional 20% forgiven.
 - Year 4: Additional 20% forgiven.
 - Year 5: Final 20% forgiven, resulting in a full grant conversion.

4. Compliance & Reporting

- Each year, business must submit:
 - Proof of active business license.
 - Evidence of operation (e.g., financials, employee records, tax filings, or equivalent).
- CRA staff verifies compliance before applying annual loan forgiveness.
- If the business closes five years before, remaining unforgiven balance becomes repayable to the CRA.

5. Program Closeout

- After five full years of operation, the entire loan is forgiven.
- CRA issues a formal grant conversion letter releasing the applicant from further repayment obligations.

Funding Disbursement: Loan-to-grant funds will be disbursed to a program participant on a reimbursement basis. The CRA and program participants will create a payment schedule to determine project milestones. Submission of receipts, invoices and documentation will be required for payment.

Standard Funding (35% up to \$200,000)

- Formula: Total Project Cost × 35% = CRA Share (max \$200,000)
- Example Scenarios:
 - If a project cost \$300,000 → 35% = \$105,000 paid out.
 - If a project cost \$600,000 → 35% = \$210,000 but capped at \$200,000.
 - If a project cost \$1,000,000 → 35% = \$350,000 but still capped at \$200,000.

Project Timeline

If a permit is required for the scope of work, it must be obtained prior to the execution of a grant agreement. Any work requiring a permit must be performed by a licensed and insured contractor and comply with the Redevelopment Design Guidelines and the City of Bartow Code of Ordinances. All renovations must be completed within one year of the execution of the grant agreement. The CRA Director and approval by the CRA Board are required if such circumstances cause the project timeline to exceed one year from the date of execution of the grant agreement. Extension will not exceed four months except in Acts of God.

Application and Evaluation Process

A property owner or tenant that is interested in participating in the Anchor Tenant Incentive Program must submit a development application (signed), proforma, statement of business as a catalyst, and resume/bio of business services (see attached) to:

City of Bartow's Community Redevelopment Agency
680 East Main Street,
Bartow, FL 33830

Development Applications will be reviewed by an evaluation committee comprised of representatives from city staff. The committee's recommendation will be presented to the CRA Board of Trustees for final approval and contract execution.

Applications will be evaluated using the following criteria:

- Consistency with the goals of the CRA's Redevelopment Plan.
- Potential for projects to attract additional businesses and to stimulate the economy within the CRA District Area.
- Overall strength of the business plan that demonstrates success experience and knowledge
- Applicants track record and business experience of five years or more in the selected industry or related field
- Investment level and sources of funds from the applicant.

Interior Building Improvement Costs: If a program participant seeks loan-to-grant funding for interior building improvements, he/she must provide two written costs estimates from licensed and insured contractors itemizing the scope and cost of work. The loan-to-grant funding amount will be based off the lower of the two costs estimates.

Business Start-Up Costs: If a program participant seeks loan-to-grant funding for business start-up costs, he/she must provide a written cost estimate of all furniture, fixtures, and unique equipment needed to launch the business. If the participant seeks a rent subsidy, he/she must provide a copy of the lease agreement.

Compliance Requirements

Program participants must sign an agreement with the CRA Board of Trustees that describes their rights and obligations upon issuance of the loan-to-grant award. To ensure successful project completion, the participant shall meet the following deadlines:

- Within 60 days of execution of the Loan-to-Grant Agreement, file a "Notice of Commencement" pursuant to the requirements of the City's Planning and Development Department.

- Within 6 to 18 months of execution of the Loan-to-Grant Agreement, request a “Review of Completed Work” from the City of Bartow.

Funding Exclusion Clause

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Next Steps

Please complete the Anchor Tenant Incentive Program application and forward to C. Howard Smith, Executive Director, at chsmith@cityofbartow.net To discuss the program in more detail, please call 863-534-0100 ex 2776.

Summer of 2026



Community Redevelopment Agency
Down Payment Assistance Application

DOWNPAYMENT ASSISTANCE PROGRAM INFORMATION

Program Overview

The Community Redevelopment Agency's (CRA) Downpayment Assistance Program offers home buyers in the City of Bartow's, CRA District up to twenty-five percent (25%) of the purchase price of an improved property, up to a maximum of thirty thousand dollars (\$30,000.00) in down payment assistance in the form of a deferred, non-amortizing, zero percent interest second mortgage.

Program Eligibility and Activities

A recipient of assistance would be required to establish the purchased property as their primary permanent residence and remain on the property as a homesteader for five (5) years. If a recipient sells, transfers, rents, or leases the property within five (5) years of the date of purchase, the recipient would be required to repay to the CRA a portion of the total down payment assistance received prorated at the rate of twenty percent (20%) for each year or part thereof remaining in the recipient's five (5) year homestead commitment.

Homebuyers who purchase a vacant lot with the intent to build a new home or homebuyers who purchase a home that requires significant rehabilitation are eligible to receive a down payment assistance incentive; however, that financial assistance from the CRA will only be disbursed after the home has been constructed or the home has been fully renovated. The CRA is willing to provide a letter of commitment to an approved Applicant's lending institution. Award funds can only be applied to the principal mortgage.

Applicants are eligible to finance the balance to purchase the homestead by personal funds or by mortgage loan. If a mortgage loan is obtained to purchase the property, the CRA requires the mortgage to be a conventional fixed-rate mortgage. Applicants may not use an interest-only or adjustable-rate mortgage (ARM) to finance the balance of the purchase of the homestead. New construction, existing structures, and homes requiring renovation are all eligible.

This program cannot be combined with other CRA programs and approval of funding incentives is based on budget availability and will be considered on a first-come, first-served basis.

Grant Process

An Applicant must complete the purchase of the home within (a) six (6) months from the date the Agency approves the assistance request for the purchase of an existing home; or (b) within one (1) year from the date the Agency approves the assistance request for the building of a new home or completion of rehabilitation of a home, or the funding will expire. Additional one-time extensions may be granted by the CRA Board of Commissioners under special and unique circumstances.

Every Applicant must provide the following information to CRA Staff:

1. A completed application form.
2. Photographs of the existing house (if any).

3. Schematic drawings illustrating the proposed new house (if building).
4. Pictures with project description outlined (if renovating).
5. Completion Certification of Home Buyers Programs.

Disbursement of Funds

Funds used to purchase existing homes will be disbursed at the closing of the property or the closing of the permanent loan on the completion of the project for new home builds.

The Applicant must provide the following information prior to disbursement:

1. A copy of the Contract to Purchase, Loan Commitment, or Agreement with Builder.
2. Written notification from the Applicant that the closing is scheduled (at least seven (7) days in advance).
3. A proposed Closing Disclosure or HUD-1 Settlement Statement (at least seven (7) days in advance).

Recipients of assistance should be prepared to provide to the CRA, at the Agency's request, financial documents that are related to the purchase, construction project, or rehabilitation project, including applicable contractor and subcontractor releases of lien, receipts or bills for materials purchased, invoices from contractors and subcontractors, and canceled checks, bank statements or satisfied invoices showing payments made to contractors and subcontractors, where applicable.

In addition, at closing and before disbursement, the Applicant will be required to sign a mortgage document in favor of the CRA Board of Commissioners to secure performance of the minimum five (5) year homestead requirement.

The Community Redevelopment Agency staff will administer the Downpayment Assistance program and applications will be accepted on a rolling basis. Funding for this program is based on budget availability and will be considered on a first-come, first-served basis. Application submission does not guarantee approval. Applications will be reviewed for completeness and compliance with program criteria to determine eligibility for grant funding. Applications that do not comply with the program criteria and conditions will not be eligible for funding. Downpayment Assistance will not be provided in the event the applicant receives cash.

DOWNPAYMENT ASSISTANCE APPLICATION

Demographic Information

Name: _____ Email Address: _____

Phone Number: _____ Alt Phone Number: _____

Address: _____ City: _____

Living Status: Renter ☐ Current Homeowner ☐ Other ☐

Other Explanation: _____

First-Time Home Buyer Yes ☐ or No ☐ If No, Previous number of homes owned: _____

Total Cost of Home: _____ DPA Requested: _____
(Standard CRA Funding is \$15,000)

Property Information

New Home/Lot Address: _____ City: _____

Property Owner (By Deed): _____

Property Legal Description: _____

Does the Property have existing liens or judgments: Yes ☐ or No ☐

Lien or Judgment information: _____

Property listed as Homestead: Yes ☐ or No ☐

Type of Mortgage Loan: _____

Lender/Financial Institute Name: _____

Agent Name: _____ Contact Number: _____

Email Address: _____

Applicants may not use an interest-only or adjustable-rate mortgage (ARM) to finance the balance of the purchase of the homestead.

Incomplete Application Submission will not be Reviewed for Approval.

1. Is financial funding available for the Home Purchase? Yes ☐ or No. ☐

Please submit financial approval documentation with the application for review.

2. Will this property be the primary residence? Yes ☐ or No ☐

3. Is homeownership viable without CRA funding? Yes ☐ or No ☐

4. If requesting more than \$15,000, what is the reason for the request? _____

5. Home Buyers Training Program within the last twelve Months? Yes ☐ or No ☐

Name of company that provided Training: _____

Title Company Information Name: _____

Agent Name: _____ Contact Number: _____

Email Address: _____ Website: _____

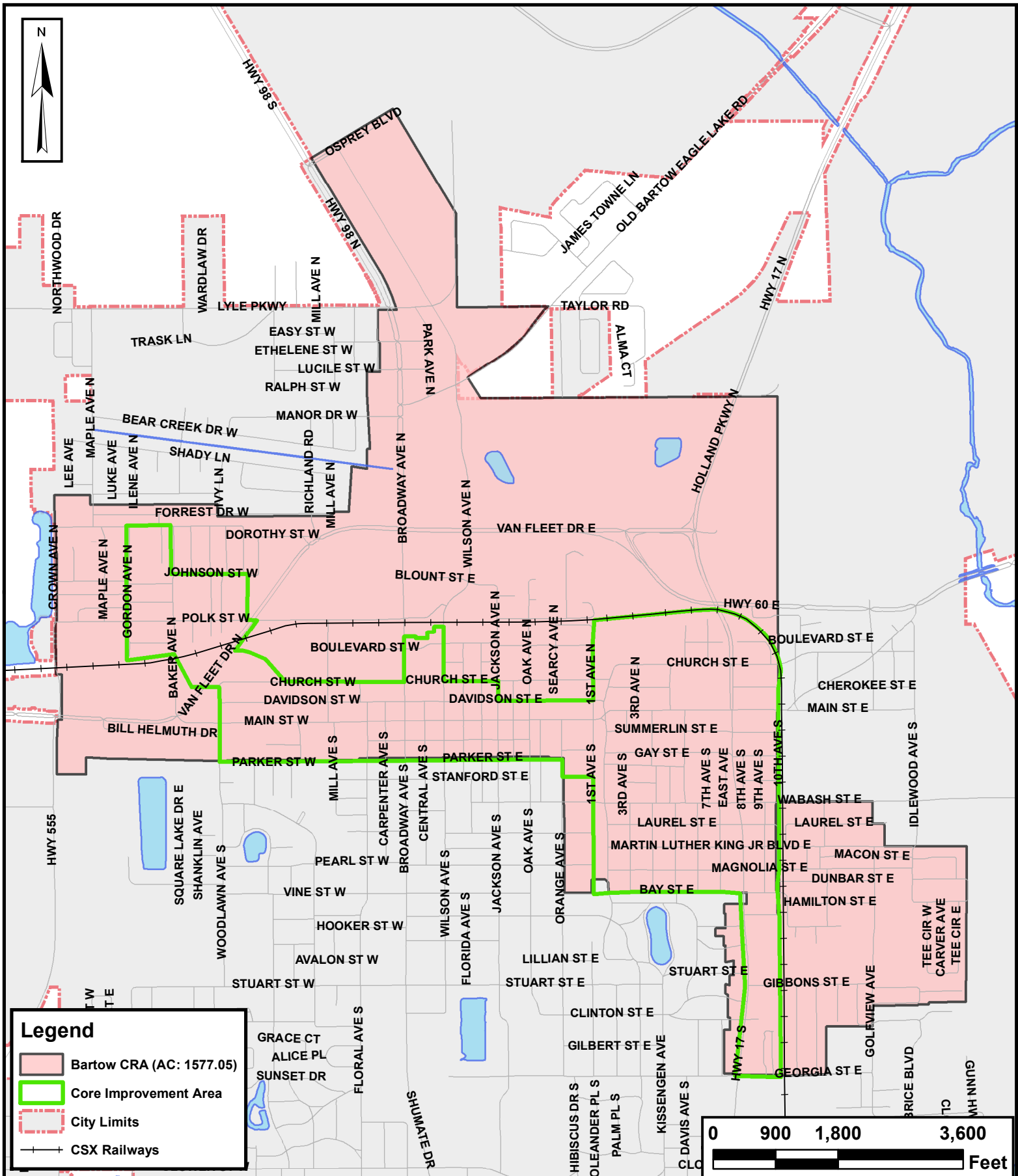
Program Documents for Submission

- Site/Property Photos ☐ Renderings/Concept Images ☐
- Copy of the Contract to Purchase, Loan Commitment, or Agreement with the Builder ☐
- Closing Disclosure or HUD-1 Settlement Statement (minimum ten (10) days in advance) ☐
- Home Buyers Training Certification ☐
- Loan PreApproval Letter (If Applicable) ☐

Note: If payment assistance is approved, the Applicant will be required to sign a mortgage document in favor of the CRA Board of Commissioners to secure performance of the minimum five (5) year homestead requirement.

Applicant Signature: _____ Date: _____

Funding for incentives is based on budget availability and will be considered on a first-come, first-served basis.



Bartow CRA 1,577.05 Acres

January 2021

Core Improvement Area

City of Bartow

