



**MEETING AGENDA
BARTOW COMMUNITY REDEVELOPMENT AGENCY**

Wednesday, April 29, 2026
8:30 A.M. (EST) or As Soon Thereafter As Possible
Bartow City Hall – Commission Chamber
450 North Wilson Avenue, Bartow, Florida 33830

Please Note: One or more of the City Commissioners may attend and may make public comments and participate in public discussion.

This meeting will automatically adjourn thirty minutes after a loss of quorum.

CALL MEETING TO ORDER:

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE:

CLERK TO CALL ROLL:

READING OF MINUTES:

1. Regular Meeting of March 25, 2026, Meeting Minutes *(Review & Action)*
2. Special Meeting of April 7, 2026, Meeting Minutes *(Review & Action)*

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

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

FINANCIAL REPORT(S):

1. Financial Report for March 2026 *(Review & Action)*

NEW BUSINESS:

1. Presentation and Discussion from Main Street Bartow - Quarterly Update
2. Discussion and Approval of Main Street Bartow's Annual Service Agreement
3. Presentation and Discussion with the Florida Housing Coalition Housing Credits
4. Presentation of the Community Redevelopment Agency's dedicated website
5. Discussion and Approval on the Community Redevelopment Agency's Business Retention Tool Kit – Phase Two (Business Growth & Development Service) Strategy

OLD BUSINESS:

1. Discussion and Approval of Funding Allocation for the Cigar Factory Redevelopment Project

REPORTS:

1. Executive Director
2. CRA Attorney
3. City Commissioner
4. Board Members

NEXT MEETING: Wednesday, May 27, 2026, 8:30 A.M., Regular Meeting

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.

MINUTES

**COMMUNITY REDEVELOPMENT AGENCY
WEDNESDAY, MARCH 25, 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, March 25, 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 Cheri Kelley, Board Member Sandy Mendez, Board Member Dr. Thomas Santarlas, and Board Member Gordon Greene, Chairperson.

BOARD MEMBER(S) ABSENT: None

CITY COMMISSIONER(S) PRESENT: Commissioner Leo E. Longworth and Commissioner Trish Pfeiffer

STAFF PRESENT: CRA Executive Director Howard Smith, Business and Community Engagement Coordinator Cheryl Baksh, City Manager Mike Herr, Deputy City Manager Peter Lear, CRA Counsel Drew Crawford, Captain Luke Hauser, and Deputy City Clerk Donna Donaldson.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

- 1. Joint Meeting, February 13, 2026 (Review and Action)**
- 2. Regular Meeting, February 25, 2026 (Review and Action)**
- 3. Special Meeting, March 4, 2026 (Review and Action)**

MOTION was made by Board Member Mendez, seconded by Board Member Kelley, to approve the February 13, 2026, Joint Meeting, February 25, 2026, Regular Meeting, and March 4, 2026, Special Meeting minutes as presented.

VOTE TO THE MOTION WAS AS FOLLOWS:

AYE: Bennett, Corbett, Ghent, Kelley, 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 February 2026 (Review and Action)

Executive Director Smith presented the financial report for February 2026. He gave a breakdown of expenses:

- February total expenses were: \$74,507.75
 - Variable expenses:
 - \$4,000 – mural renderings as part of a larger project. The total cost of the project is going to be \$32,000, with the \$4,000 already paid and credited as previously approved.
 - Fixed expenses were: \$83,039
 - \$15,958 – a credit was applied to correct a prior misallocation
 - \$50,000 – two (2) year services related to marketing and branding consulting
 - \$1,620 – staff training and travel, including the FRA membership, board certification costs, per diem, lodging, and annual membership dues
 - \$30,000 – first year contractual payment to Main Street Bartow

Board Member Mendez asked when the murals would be done.

Executive Director Smith stated that they are working through the contract phase. Once the contract has been approved, they look to launch that program in June.

Board Member Santarlas inquired about the mural at Palace Pizza. He noted that it had been indicated that the city would not permit them to keep those murals. Additionally, he pointed out that the CRA is investing in more murals, and he believes that Palace Pizza's mural aligns well with the character of the City of Bartow.

Executive Director Smith explained that he cannot discuss any communications between the business owner and the city. He mentioned that the owner of Palace Pizza submitted a façade grant application to have the side of their building painted. As of now, no colors have been chosen for the project. Additionally, it was noted that the façade grant does not cover the cost of the mural.

Board Member Santarlas indicated that one of the commissioners present today may have the answer to his question, and he invited Commissioner Pfeiffer to the podium to provide an explanation.

Commissioner Pfeiffer mentioned that the Palace Pizza building had been repainted, and there was a small area on the building where Main Street Bartow intended to fund a mural. However, funding became limited for Main Street because the Community Redevelopment Agency (CRA) had already allocated its budget. As a result, the opportunity for funding from Main Street Bartow was no longer available. She noted that the owners are still interested in having a mural, but she is unsure about the next steps.

Board Member Santarlas inquired if funding were reinstated, would the city permit them to display the same mural again.

Commissioner Pfeiffer mentioned that they do not want the same mural as before; however, the property owner has a specific idea for what they would like depicted on their wall. She explained that one issue with their existing mural was that it served as an advertisement for their business. She noted that approximately five or six years ago, the Supreme Court issued a ruling that allowed property owners to create murals without needing approval from the city. The owners have decided against featuring the pizza character on their building but have a vision for a new design. Additionally, she mentioned that they are looking to install container guards outside the building.

Chairperson Greene tabled this issue because it is outside the scope of the agenda for today's meeting.

(A copy of the February 2026 financial reports is attached therein and described as Exhibit A.)

MOTION was made by Board Member Mendez, seconded by Board Member Santarlas, to accept the February 2026 Financial Report as presented.

VOTE TO THE MOTION WAS AS FOLLOWS:

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

Motion carried.

NEW BUSINESS

1. Discussion and update on the Community Redevelopment Agency's Community Policing Innovation Program.

The CRA Board received a presentation from Captain Luke Hauser regarding fourth quarter (Q4) 2025 activities. This item had been previously scheduled for the prior month but was deferred to the current agenda.

Captain Hauser mentioned that Officer Duane Paul is the CRA officer assigned to the district. He explained that the CRA unit focuses on improving residents' quality of life through rehabilitation and redevelopment efforts, primarily supported by public-private partnerships. He noted that significant improvements have been made since the program's inception.

During Q4 2025, Officer Paul served as the primary unit on 536 calls for service. These included 282 park walk-and-talks, 254 additional calls for service, 24 traffic assignments, 7 suspicious vehicle calls, and 2 petty theft incidents. The remaining calls were categorized as miscellaneous due to the wide variety of service types.

Captain Hauser emphasized that the department's goals include building community partnerships, increasing social media engagement, participating in community events, and expanding the walk-and-talk program across all officers. He noted that Officer Paul conducted 282 park walk-and-talks during the quarter, while other officers collectively conducted 350. Overall, the department experienced a 22.5% increase in park walk-and-talks compared to Q4 of the previous year.

Captain Hauser also reported that the department launched its body camera and in-car camera programs during Q4, accompanied by a social media outreach effort. As a result, Facebook engagement increased by approximately 288%.

Captain Hauser noted that Officer Paul also organized quarterly community events, referred to as "community fun days," in partnership with organizations such as BayCare and Peace River Center. These events provide resources to residents within the CRA district and are typically held at locations including Asbury Gardens and Under the Bridge Park on Polk Street.

Additional community engagement efforts during Q4 included participation in the Great American Teach-In at multiple schools, including Stevens Elementary and Bartow Elementary, as well as the "Shop with a Cop" program. The holiday program served 11 families and 19 children within the CRA district.

Captain Hauser concluded by reviewing crime statistics, noting that property-related crimes (including burglary, theft, criminal mischief, and robbery) decreased from 100 incidents in Q4 2024 to 73 incidents in Q4 2025, representing a 27% reduction. He stated this reflects positive progress in improving public safety and quality of life within the district.

Captain Hauser concluded his presentation and offered to answer any questions.

Board Member Santarlas stated that he understood this presentation to be a trial run and commended staff for providing the type of detailed reporting and vision the Board had requested. He noted that Officer Paul appears to be performing well in coordination with the Commission's goals. He added that, at a future time, the Board should revisit the discussion regarding the potential availability of funding for additional officer.

Executive Director Smith stated that the contract is scheduled for renewal in July. He recommended that a meeting be scheduled approximately 60 days prior to the renewal date to review the scope of services, discuss any updates or changes, and determine how the CRA would like to proceed. He noted that once finalized, the renewed contract would be brought back to the Board for approval and that an update would be provided at that time.

Board Member Santarlas commented that the program has been beneficial to the community and suggested that consideration be given to allocating funding for a second officer in the future.

Vice Chairperson Ghent requested an open discussion regarding the community policing conference. He inquired whether participation by Board members or the assigned CRA officer might be possible, noting that even if attendance is not feasible every year, it would be beneficial to participate periodically.

Captain Hauser responded that the department actively participates in community policing conferences and related events across the state. He explained that the department's crime analyst—who assists with preparing these presentations—regularly attends such conferences to stay informed on best practices and emerging trends in community policing.

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

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

Executive Director Smith presented the Construction Manager at Risk (CMAR) contract with Rodda Construction for the Innovation Center, along with the total project budget for construction, design, and equipment in an amount not to exceed \$3.4 million. He

reminded the Board that the proposal had been discussed at the previous month's meeting following the completion of the RFP process, which resulted in Rodda Construction being selected for the CMAR contract.

Executive Director Smith noted that representatives from both firms—Jason Robert of Rodda Construction and Tim Puff of Grace Design Studios—were present to address any specific questions regarding the construction, design, or equipment budgets.

Executive Director Smith explained that the CMAR agreement, provided to the Board for review, authorizes construction of the Innovation Center. The facility will house the CRA offices, the Executive Director of the Bartow Economic Development Council (BEDC), and CareerSource Polk, which will manage and operate the first floor in partnership with the CRA. The project's primary goals include workforce development, economic growth, community engagement, and training.

Executive Director Smith detailed that the guaranteed maximum price (GMP) for construction is \$2,539,087, with an additional \$860,913 allocated for design, technology features, and equipment, bringing the total project budget to approximately \$3.4 million.

Executive Director Smith requested Board approval to proceed with entering into the contract with Rodda Construction. He stated that the finalized contract would be brought back to the Board for ratification at the next meeting and that the additional time spent in review ensured the contract terms were properly finalized. He concluded by inviting questions regarding the process, budget, construction, or design elements.

MOTION was made by Board Member Mendez, seconded by Vice Chairperson Ghent, to approve the overall construction budget and move forward for the ratification of the contract with Rodda Construction.

VOTE TO THE MOTION:

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

NAY: None

Motion carries.

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

City Manager Herr asked CRA Counsel Crawford to confirm his understanding of the contract approval process. He stated that, based on how the item is written, it appears that the CRA Board Chair is authorized to execute the contract and that approval of the project budget also constitutes approval of the contract itself. He clarified that this interpretation would allow staff to proceed with issuing a notice to begin work once approved.

CRA Counsel Crawford confirmed that his understanding aligned with City Manager Herr's interpretation. He stated that the motion authorizes the project to move forward and that, in standard CRA procedure, such action constitutes approval of the Executive Director's request and authorization for the Board Chair to execute the contract.

A discussion was held regarding the approval process for the Innovation Center construction contract.

City Manager Herr stated that, as the contract documents were finalized and available, he saw no reason to delay action for another 30 days and recommended moving forward.

CRA Counsel Crawford confirmed that the contract had been reviewed and modified to protect the CRA's interests but acknowledged that the process had moved more quickly than usual and that the contract had not been included in the original agenda packet for prior review.

It was noted that the document is a comprehensive 113-page agreement reflecting a guaranteed maximum price (GMP) of approximately \$2.5 million, with potential adjustments based on final design details. CRA Counsel Crawford explained that while the contract was ready for execution, he preferred that Board members have the opportunity to review it fully before final action.

Board members discussed the procedural concerns, with some noting that the earlier vote had been understood as approval of the project budget rather than the contract itself. However, consensus was reached that, given the City Manager's and Counsel's review and support, and in the interest of keeping the project timeline on track, the Board would proceed with authorizing the Chair to execute the contract and allow issuance of a Notice to Proceed.

City Manager Herr stated that the contract should have already been reviewed and included on the agenda for consideration. He noted that the Board had previously approved the \$3.4 million project budget, making an additional approval unnecessary. He emphasized that the proper process should have involved reviewing the finalized contract, placing it on the agenda, and requesting formal approval at that time. City Manager Herr expressed disappointment that the process had not been handled as efficiently as expected.

CRA Counsel Crawford apologized for the oversight, explaining that he had not initially realized the contract document would need to be created from the beginning. He stated that while staff had reviewed what they believed to be the appropriate materials, the final document required additional development. He extended his sincere apologies to the City Manager and the Board for the misunderstanding and delay.

City Manager Herr stated that although the Board had already taken action on the project budget, the proper process would be to ensure the contract is fully reviewed before approval. He recommended scheduling a special CRA Board meeting on Friday at 9:00

a.m. to allow members time to review the contract and accompanying fact sheet in advance. He emphasized that the Board should not move forward on the \$3.4 million project without first reviewing the agreement, and that holding a special meeting would ensure transparency, proper procedure, and formal approval by the governing body.

Board Member Bennett thanked City Manager Herr for clarifying the process and stated that her understanding was that the Board had only approved the project amount. She expressed concern about the limited time available to review the contract before the proposed Friday meeting, noting that two days would not be sufficient.

Board Member Bennett agreed that the Board should have adequate time to thoroughly review the document, including details such as cost structures and budget breakdowns, before taking action. She emphasized that approvals should follow standard procedures, ensuring that all plans, permits, and documents are finalized prior to committing funds. She reaffirmed her support for the Innovation Center project but stated that proper review and due diligence were necessary before proceeding.

It was a consensus to have a special meeting sometime next week to review and approve the CMAR contract for the Innovation Center. So, the previous motion was withdrawn.

3. Discussion and update on the Main Street Streetscape design concept project.

Executive Director Smith clarified that items appearing on the agenda from month to month are included as necessary. He commended the Board for its efficiency in advancing projects, noting that funds are being distributed, businesses are being supported, and redevelopment efforts are progressing. He also expressed appreciation for the Board's time and dedication, which enables staff to move projects and incentive programs forward, and thanked the members for their service.

Executive Director Smith stated that the item was intended to provide an update and brief discussion on the Main Street streetscape concept design. He explained that in September, he was asked to envision potential improvements to Main Street, including enhancements to landscaping, irrigation, and overall aesthetics.

Executive Director Smith noted that, through the CCNA contract with Patel, Greene and Associates, LLC, a concept design was developed, including both high-end and low-end options. He clarified that no formal action is required by the CRA Board at this time, as any capital improvement project of this nature would need to be initiated and designated by the City, not the CRA. He added that while the CRA may contribute funding, it cannot independently direct such a project.

Executive Director Smith stated that he is seeking the Board's approval of the concept as presented. He explained that the concept would then be presented to the City Commission, which will determine whether to move forward or leave it as a conceptual plan. If advanced by the City Commission, the item would return to the CRA Board for further review and approval.

Ms. Emilyvette Degaetano, Director of Landscape Architecture, provided a brief update on the streetscape design concept project. She explained that the project scope included an assessment of existing site conditions from the intersection of Broadway Avenue east along Main Street to Davidson Avenue, south along Davidson Avenue to Summerlin Street, and along the side streets from the 100 to the 500 blocks. She reviewed the advantages and disadvantages associated with both the high-budget and low-budget design options:

High budget: between \$4.5 million to \$6.4 million

- Pros:
 - Permanent and seamless – blends with sidewalk; higher quality look
 - ADA friendly – flat, continuous surface
 - Provides a safety buffer between patrons and traffic
- Cons:
 - Costly and time-consuming – involves concrete, drainage, and utility work
 - Not reversible – permanent change to the street
 - More disruption – impacts traffic during construction
 - Complex permitting – may need full design and row reclassification

Low Budget: between \$900,000 to \$1.1 million

- Pros:
 - Lower cost and quick install – no major demolition or reconstruction
 - Reduced disruption – reduces utility conflicts
 - Flexible permitting – good for temporary or seasonal use
 - Preserves drainage – no change to drainage flow
- Cons:
 - Minor renovation – may appear less grandiose
 - More irrigation – needs regular upkeep and maintenance
 - No proposed café seating – businesses prefer more area for seating.

Ms. Degaetano continued with her presentation.

Board Member Santarlas expressed concern regarding parking, noting that the city is already experiencing a parking deficit and emphasizing the importance of not losing existing parking spaces.

Ms. Degaetano clarified that the proposal does not eliminate all on-street parking. She noted that reductions are primarily being considered along Main Street, as it is the primary corridor. In other areas, any potential reduction would be minimal, such as the removal of a single space, while still maintaining available parking. She added that internal discussions have identified possible alternative parking locations. Ms. Degaetano

emphasized that the intent is to strategically reduce parking only in select areas where it would provide the greatest benefit.

Board Member Santarlas asked if those locations be where the main businesses are located, so where are the people going to park?

Chairperson Greene stated that it is only on the 100 block, in front of Palace Pizza, so it can create café seating.

Executive Director Smith stated that the overall concept is focused on improving pedestrian movement and enhancing engagement throughout the downtown area. He explained that the design is intended to activate the downtown by encouraging foot traffic and creating a more connected and accessible environment, rather than solely focusing on stationary uses.

Executive Director Smith noted that the concept also considers the needs of local businesses and incorporates parking solutions designed to help support access and activity. Executive Director Smith emphasized that the design aims to address existing challenges and provide thoughtful, balanced improvements to the downtown corridor.

Executive Director Smith requested that the Board make a motion to accept the streetscape concept as presented. He stated that, if the project moves forward, staff will conduct one-on-one discussions with each Board member and the City Commission to ensure a clear understanding of the proposal and to determine the highest and best use of available funding for a feasible concept.

MOTION was made by Vice Chairperson Ghent, seconded by Board Member Santarlas, to accept the presented documents and the scope of work as is, as factual.

VOTE TO THE MOTION AS FOLLOWS:

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

NAY: None

Motion carries.

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

4. Review and take action to amend, rotate, or sunset the Community Redevelopment Agency's incentives and grants for FY 2025-2026.

Executive Director Smith stated that this is to review the CRA's incentive grant funding outlook in light of the recent \$18 million debt obligation. He explained that the new debt will require annual payments of approximately \$1.4 million, which will limit the amount of discretionary funding available for grants, incentives, and related community programs in future fiscal years, including FY 2026-2027.

Executive Director Smith stated that staff is evaluating which programs should continue annually, which should rotate by fiscal year, and which programs should be sunset based on utilization, impact, and overall alignment with the CRA's mission. He suggested a rotation model in which certain funding categories would alternate between commercial and residential priorities from year to year. He also noted that programs with little or no recent use, such as the BTR reimbursement program and the anchor tenant program, may be considered for elimination.

Executive Director Smith proposed reallocating approximately \$1.4 million in programming funds across several grant and incentive categories. His recommended allocations included:

- Arts in Public Places \$ 50,000
- Quality of Life \$ 50,000
- Developer Incentives \$100,000
- Down Payment Assistance \$ 50,000
- Future Initiatives \$200,000
- Housing Rehab \$330,000
- Facade Grant \$125,000
- Business Grant \$175,000
- Small Business Incentive \$100,000
- Commercial Enhancement \$200,000

He explained that these figures reflect adjustments from the current fiscal year and are intended to preserve the CRA's most impactful programs while remaining fiscally responsible.

Executive Director Smith emphasized that the CRA cannot fund every program at the same level each year and that a rotation system would help communicate priorities to the public and ensure the trust fund is aligned with the agency's obligations and mission. Executive Director Smith noted that he would discuss the recommendations further in one-on-one meetings with Board members before finalizing the FY 2026-2027 budget strategy.

Executive Director Smith also specifically recommended sunseting the BTR program due to zero utilization, continuing the banner program on a rotation basis, and maintaining the facade grant, arts in public places, and quality of life programs as core offerings. He concluded by inviting questions and discussion regarding the proposed funding changes, rotations, and program sunseting recommendations.

Board Member Mendez asked whether an event such as a jazz festival could be supported through existing funding categories, such as Arts in Public Places or Future Initiatives. She inquired whether these programs could be used to support community engagement

or other projects and events that are not specifically identified in the current program descriptions.

Executive Director Smith stated that the CRA cannot fund the jazz festival directly under the current program structure. He added that if a related community improvement project were proposed, such as site preparation, cleanup, or planning efforts tied to placemaking, it could potentially be considered under the appropriate program, provided it aligns with legal and funding requirements.

Chairperson Greene stated that, because the CRA will have limited funds in FY 2026-2027, the Board must be selective in its funding decisions. He noted the need to prioritize programs and maintain fiscal discipline while continuing to support initiatives that provide visible community benefit, including maintaining the banner program within available budget constraints.

Executive Director Smith stated that the banner program would continue with a \$10,000 allocation to maintain existing banners and support replacements as needed. He explained that the funding would operate similarly to a line of credit, allowing staff to address banner-related needs as they arise.

Chairperson Greene stated that the banner program would operate with a designated maintenance reserve for the next three years. He explained that if a banner is damaged during that period, funding would be available to repair or replace it as needed.

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

MOTION was made by Board Member Mendez, seconded by Board Member Kelley, to approve the funding changes, rotations, and program sunseting recommendation by Executive Director Smith.

VOTE TO THE MOTION AS FOLLOWS:

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

NAY: None

Motion carries.

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

5. Review and take action on the Community Redevelopment Agency business retention tool kit incentives and services.

Executive Director Smith presented both Items 5 & 6 as one item since it pertained to the same small business initiatives. He presented revisions and additions to the CRA's Small Business Incentive Program and related business support initiatives. He explained that the purpose of the item was to strengthen business retention efforts by creating a

communication-focused toolkit to help local businesses improve branding, digital presence, and outreach. He noted that the proposed program would initially provide consultant-led services to up to 20 businesses, with support tailored to each business's specific needs, such as website development, branding materials, and communication planning.

Executive Director Smith stated that the program would not provide grant funds directly to businesses, but would instead pay consultants to work with participating businesses. He emphasized that the goal is to help businesses expand their reach and better connect with customers in Bartow and surrounding communities. Board discussion included whether businesses should have "skin in the game" through a required contribution. In response, the program was amended to include a \$500 reimbursement-based participation fee, which would be returned to the business upon completion of the program.

The Board also discussed safeguards to ensure participant engagement and consultant accountability. It was noted that if a business did not participate or respond, services could be discontinued. Board members and staff further discussed whether a pool of consultants could be used to encourage local participation and provide flexibility. Executive Director Smith explained that the program would be structured with a phased process, beginning with an assessment and kickoff meeting, followed by planning and final deliverables. He concluded by stating that the revised program would be funded over two budget years, subject to available funding, to maximize its impact on downtown and broader CRA business retention efforts.

Executive Director Smith stated that the first phase of the program involves developing a small business communication plan, an initiative he will guide participants through to establish a foundation for their business over a two-week period as part of a two-phased approach. Phase 1 focuses on communications promises, while Phase 2 provides services to expand their reach, including access to financial capital, strategies to improve service delivery for customer retention, and opportunities to grow their business within the City of Bartow.

He noted that the program is funded with \$100,000 to work with existing businesses and develop a methodology with a toolkit for business retention. Under the small business communication plan initiative, staff would collaborate with businesses to enhance their reach through their web page, granular materials, and a communication plan for reaching their audience.

Executive Director Smith proposed up to \$5,000 per business to contract with a dedicated consultant for work on their brand, digital footprint, and communication plan. He clarified that the \$5,000 goes directly to the consultant for one-on-one services with each business, not to the business itself.

From a branding standpoint, he explained that businesses vary in their current levels—some have strong elements while others do not—and that logos, grandma materials, and

other items should be cohesive, using consistent colors, fonts, and templates that align with local identifiers like purple casing and gold to ensure a unified message across markets.

He highlighted issues with website optimization, such as incorrect algorithms for Google search visibility, citing a local restaurant that ranked sixth rather than in the top three results customers typically view. He emphasized sentiment analysis from customer posts and reviews to build positive experiences, along with a solid leadership strategy, community campaign, brand communications, future strategy, media campaigns, cloud materials, and designs. Businesses would also conduct surveys to leverage favorable sentiment analysis, as people prefer places with positive reviews.

The program timeline includes:

Weeks 1-2: Consultant kick-off meeting with business owners and initial terrific business assessment.

Weeks 3-4: Collaborative planning workshop to set deliverables, assessing the business and meeting them where they are.

Weeks 6-7: Final deliverables, such as an optimized website (including Twitter integration), branding plan, pamphlets, marketing strategies for reaching their audience, and an action plan with steps.

Executive Director Smith reiterated that not every business will use the full \$5,000, as services are tailored—e.g., skipping website work for those who already have one, or focusing on branding materials or other needs—and emphasized that participants receive actual deliverables, documentation, and materials for moving forward.

Board Member Santarlas asked who would fund implementation of recommendations from Steps 2 through 3. He noted that while the CRA provides \$5,000 per business for consultant services and explanations, clarification was needed on payment for executing those recommendations.

Executive Director Smith explained that the program is designed to help businesses get their principal ideas and plans implemented by providing them with templates and guidance, such as for website development, but that the CRA does not pay for the actual implementation costs. He clarified that businesses are responsible for paying for items like website development if they choose to proceed, and that the program's purpose is to equip them with the tools needed to expand their reach.

The Board discussed the reimbursement of the \$5,000 consultant amount and whether requiring some level of "skin in the game" would increase participant engagement. Chairperson Greene stated that businesses may be more likely to stay responsive and engaged if they have a financial stake in the process, since the consultant's work depends on business input and participation.

It was noted that if the service is offered at no cost, some businesses may agree to participate initially but fail to return calls, attend sessions, or provide the information needed for the consultant to complete the work. Chairperson Greene stated that an upfront contribution could help ensure that businesses remain engaged and that the city receives value from the consultant services being provided.

Executive Director Smith stated that businesses with different needs may require different levels of support and that the consultant's work may include website review, branding, collateral materials, and communication planning. He noted that some businesses may already have a website or marketing materials in place, while others may need a more comprehensive assessment.

The Board discussed a possible reimbursement structure in which the business would contribute \$500 upfront and receive reimbursement upon completion of the program. It was noted that this approach would provide accountability while avoiding a long-term financial burden on small businesses. The Board further discussed that the consultant contract would remain up to \$5,000 per business, with services limited to deliverables tied to the business's actual needs and participation.

Chairperson Greene asked whether the program could be structured to include a pool of consultants in order to encourage more local consultants to offer their services.

Executive Director Smith responded affirmatively and stated that he had recommended structuring the program within the available budget so that it would have lasting impact. He noted that the goal is to expand the program's reach to businesses in downtown and throughout the service district, and that the intent is to fund the program for three years.

Board Member Bennett recommended keeping the consulting service in-house, stating that working with small businesses is very personal and should not be outsourced for obvious reasons.

MOTION was made by Vice Chairperson Ghent, seconded by Board Member Mendez, to approve the business retention tool kit incentives and services.

VOTE TO THE MOTION AS FOLLOWS:

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

NAY: None

Motion carries

6. Review and take action on the Community Redevelopment Agency's revision to the small business incentive program for implementation in 2026.

Executive Director Smith stated that the purpose of the review is for the board to take action to approve revisions and additions to the small business incentive program. He noted that in September 25, 2025, the board approved the small business incentive program, converting \$10,000 loans to grants for cosmetic improvements. Since that time, the program was funded with \$100,000 as an initiative to ensure funding was allocated in case of disruptions to state funding from Tallahassee.

Executive Director Smith proposed moving forward with a budget reallocation to fund the small business incentive program, providing \$10,000 for businesses operating five years or more in the district area. The program covers interior cosmetic improvements, including ADA compliance, fire code requirements, plumbing and electrical upgrades, lighting fixtures and accessories, interior painting, flooring, hardwood, concrete, interior door security systems, and related pre-approved items. Eligible businesses to focus on are retail, restaurants, and personal services (e.g., salons, spas, studios).

Executive Director Smith explained that recipients must remain in business for five years, during which \$2,000 of the grant depreciates annually to zero, effectively becoming a full grant. The grants are structured as forgivable loans designed to be fulfilled over time.

Executive Director Smith proposed amendments, including direct payments of up to \$8,000 to vendors, with \$2,000 as reimbursement upon receipt submission, maintaining the total \$10,000 program value. He recommended bringing applications to the CRA board for approval rather than administrative approval, to allow discussion and oversight.

Executive Director Smith noted prioritization of applicants who have not previously received assistance, with a five-year exclusion period (unless waived via prior contract language). The program, originally for one year, is now proposed as a two-year project: 20 businesses this year and 12 next year.

Success measures include filling approximately 13 slots, widespread communication through Main Streets and Chambers partners, and ensuring projects are approved and completed within the first month to utilize funds before the next budget cycle. The program prioritizes small cosmetic improvements (e.g., painting, fixtures, equipment) for quick impact to enhance business facades.

MOTION was made by Board Member Mendez, seconded by Vice Chairperson Ghent, to approve the revisions to the small business incentive program to be implemented in 2026.

VOTE TO THE MOTION AS FOLLOWS:

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

NAY: None

Motion carries

7. Review and take action to amend the proposed FY 2025-2026 annual budget.

Executive Director Smith stated that the first item is approval of the \$18 million budget. He explained that this involves reallocating \$3.4 million from the transformative project item in the existing budget to fund construction of the right building.

Executive Director Smith noted that approval of the \$18 million budget must precede approval of the fiscal year operating budget, and that this will be accomplished by resolution. He confirmed that board members have copies of the resolution and presentation.

CRA Counsel Crawford stated that the resolution document was completed at 4:00 p.m. the previous day. He recommended postponing its consideration until the special meeting next week to allow board members time to review and understand the resolution and its accompanying documents. He explained that a formal process is required because the resolution involves the allocation of new funds within the Redevelopment Trust Fund.

CRA Counsel Crawford further noted that a separate set of budget amendments would be considered during the current meeting; however, those amendments only involve reallocating already-appropriated funds. According to law, such reallocations may be approved by motion and recorded in the minutes. He added that staff could respond to any questions regarding the allocation of the \$18 million but reiterated his recommendation to defer formal action on the resolution until the next meeting.

Chairperson Greene asked if this applies to the remainder of the agenda.

CRA Counsel Crawford responded no, it is just for this item.

Chairperson Greene inquired whether there was additional information to review and suggested walking through the details to ensure the Board had a clear understanding.

Executive Director Smith noted that after returning from a day off, he would be able to meet with the Board, either through a brief face-to-face discussion or a Teams meeting, to review the budget application and related items. He stated that the team had already held a productive brainstorming and work session, and that members generally shared an understanding of the material, allowing the discussion to move forward efficiently.

8. Review and take action on Resolution 2026-03-R proposed annual budget.

This item was tabled until the Special Meeting next week.

9. Review and take action on the Community Redevelopment Agency's proposed project budget for land acquisition, parcel development, park amenities, and capital improvement projects.

This item was tabled until the Special Meeting next week.

10. Review and take action on Resolution No. 2026-04-R for FY 2025-2026 proposed annual project budget.

Executive Director Smith explained that it pertains to the reallocation of funds within the survey operations budget. He stated that the proposed changes do not add new funding but simply reallocate existing funds within the current operating budget. Specifically, the proposal shifts allocations into the incentive line item consistent with the \$1.4 million previously reviewed during the sunset rotation discussion.

Executive Director Smith noted that the stairway construction project, originally budgeted at \$2.2 million, has been adjusted to \$2 million. The reallocated \$200,000 would be directed toward other projects with greater community impact. He explained that this funding also supports the planned CRA investment in the cigar factory redevelopment project, involving either the building or adjacent land, to promote redevelopment goals.

Executive Director Smith further noted that the property acquisition line item was reduced to zero, with future acquisition-related expenditures to be managed under the \$18 million redevelopment allocation previously discussed. He concluded by requesting approval of the proposed budget reallocation for Fiscal Year 2025–2026.

Chairperson Greene asked whether the Board could approve the item without adopting a formal resolution.

Executive Director Smith confirmed that the item was to be approved by a vote rather than by resolution.

CRA Counsel Crawford confirmed that no resolution was required. He explained that reallocations of previously appropriated funds may be approved by motion, provided the motion specifies the funds being reappropriated.

MOTION was made by Board Member Mendez, seconded by Vice Chairperson Ghent, to approve the reappropriation of funds as presented.

VOTE TO THE MOTION AS FOLLOWS:

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

NAY: None

Motion carries

OLD BUSINESS:

1. Discussion and update on EV charging stations with the City of Bartow.

Executive Director Smith stated that the city is moving forward with installing EV charging stations. He noted that, in a previous presentation, 13 potential locations had been identified for the charging stations, and that each station will have four ports, allowing up to 52 vehicles to charge at one time. He added that the City Commission approved the selected company at its most recent meeting and that the consultant would provide a future presentation to the Board once the installation process is underway.

Board Member Santarlas asked whether the charging stations would be capable of providing a full charge in 45 minutes or less.

Executive Director Smith stated that the proposed units would be standard EV chargers rather than high-impact fast chargers.

Executive Director Smith reported on 970 E. Main Street, stating that quotes for demolition of the building had been received and were ranging from approximately \$96,000 to \$130,000. He noted that he was awaiting one additional quote and recommended moving forward with the demolition. He stated that the demolition could likely be completed within the next 30 to 45 days.

Executive Director Smith also noted that he would provide an update by email regarding the installation date for the first EV charging station. He advised that he would let the Board know once the schedule is confirmed.

REPORTS:

1. EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Executive Director Smith had nothing to report.

2. CRA Attorney

CRA Counsel Crawford had nothing to report.

3. City Commissioner

Commissioner Longworth had nothing to report.

4. Board Members

• Anthony Ghent

Vice Chairperson Ghent stated that he attended streetscaping classes featuring regulatory guidance. He explained that the guidance addresses multiple requirements, including detailed tree assessments with individual charts for branches (beyond basic work orders). He confirmed that Commissioner Pfeiffer was correct regarding the

replacement of a tree that had been removed, noting ongoing tree maintenance—including watering—in parking areas.

Vice Chairperson Ghent outlined upcoming project phases, including parking and planning for a Jazz Festival, with a general build-out scheduled for this weekend. He highlighted a prominent jazz artist from Bartow who has achieved top ten national recognition for decades and noted the transition from local events to larger performances.

- **Sandy Mendez**

Board Member Mendez had nothing to report.

- **Tom Santarlas**

Board Member Santarlas asked Captain Hauser to consider prioritizing a female candidate for the second CRA officer position, noting the significant number of female business owners within the CRA district.

Captain Hauser responded that this has already been brought up.

- **Shana Bennett**

Board Member Bennett thanked City Manager Herr for bringing up the CMAR contract and commended the other board members for their support and efforts.

- **Jerome Corbett**

Board Member Corbett had nothing to report.

- **Cheri Kelley**

Board Member Kelley had nothing to report.

- **Gordon Greene**

Chairperson Greene had nothing to report.

NEXT MEETING

Chairperson Greene announced there will be a Special Meeting held on Tuesday, April 7, 2026, at 8:30 a.m. The next regular meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, Tuesday, April 29, 2026, at 8:30 a.m.

ADJOURNMENT

With no further business to discuss, Chairperson Greene adjourned the meeting at 10:23 a.m.

CHAIRPERSON GORDON GREENE

ATTEST:

DEPUTY CITY CLERK DONNA DONALDSON

(SEAL)

**COMMUNITY REDEVELOPMENT AGENCY SPECIAL MEETING
TUESDAY, APRIL 7, 2026, 8:30 A.M. (EST)
CITY COMMISSION CHAMBER
450 N. WILSON AVE., BARTOW, FL 33830**

The Community Redevelopment Agency held a Special Meeting on Tuesday, April 7, 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 8:32 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 Dr. Thomas Santarlas, and Board Member Gordon Greene, Chairperson.

BOARD MEMBER(S) ABSENT: Board Member Sandy Mendez

CITY COMMISSIONER(S) PRESENT: Commissioner Laura Simpson and Commissioner Leo E. Longworth

STAFF PRESENT: Executive Director C. Howard Smith, Business and Community Engagement Coordinator Cheryl Baksh, CRA Counsel Drew Crawford, City Manager Mike Herr, Finance Director Peter Lear, IT Director Frank Canovaca, and Deputy City Clerk Donna Donaldson.

Chairperson Greene announced there is a new update on the CRA Counsel.

Executive Director Smith introduced Mrs. Savannah Cerullo as the new CRA Counsel.

CRA Counsel Cerullo introduced herself and greeted the Board. She stated that she would be assuming the day-to-day responsibility for providing legal counsel to the CRA and expressed that she looks forward to working with and getting to know everyone.

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

1. Matters not appearing on this agenda.

Chairperson Greene opened and closed the 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.

NEW BUSINESS:

1. Public Hearing and consideration of CRA Resolution No. 2026-03-R A RESOLUTION OF THE BARTOW COMMUNITY REDEVELOPMENT AGENCY RELATING TO FINANCE; AMENDING THE FISCAL YEAR 2025-2026 BUDGET PURSUANT TO THE UNIFORM SPECIAL DISTRICT ACCOUNTABILITY ACT TO MAKE ADDITIONAL APPROPRIATIONS; AUTHORIZING THE CRA EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR TO TAKE ALL ACTION NECESSARY TO COMPLETE THE APPROVAL PROCESS FOR THE FISCAL YEAR 2025-2026 BUDGET WITH THE CITY OF BARTOW, FLORIDA; PROVIDING FOR AN EFFECTIVE DATE.

CRA Counsel Cerullo read the title into the record:

"A RESOLUTION OF THE BARTOW COMMUNITY REDEVELOPMENT AGENCY RELATING TO FINANCE; AMENDING THE FISCAL YEAR 2025-2026 BUDGET PURSUANT TO THE UNIFORM SPECIAL DISTRICT ACCOUNTABILITY ACT TO MAKE ADDITIONAL APPROPRIATIONS; AUTHORIZING THE CRA EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR TO TAKE ALL ACTION NECESSARY TO COMPLETE THE APPROVAL PROCESS FOR THE FISCAL YEAR 2025-2026 BUDGET WITH THE CITY OF BARTOW, FLORIDA; PROVIDING FOR AN EFFECTIVE DATE."

Executive Director Smith presented Resolution 2026-03-R for adoption by the Board and provided an overview of the \$18 million budget, as outlined in the agenda packet and accompanying presentation materials. He explained that the total debt obligation of \$18.1 million is divided into several key expense categories, including taxable and non-taxable expenditures.

Executive Director Smith noted that \$3.4 million is designated for the Innovation Center project. This expense was moved from the CRA's operating budget into the debt obligation to allow the project to be financed at a non-taxable rate. Additionally, the funds originally allocated for the Innovation Center have been reallocated to provide a \$2 million incentive to the City for development of the Sugar Factory project, which will be discussed further at an upcoming Board meeting.

Executive Director Smith stated that approximately \$717,000 annually is budgeted for maintenance of properties acquired by the CRA, including landscaping, fencing, and other necessary upkeep. Approximately \$5 million is earmarked for property acquisitions within the district to advance the CRA's vision plan. These acquisitions may include key parcels such as the properties near the pawn shop and checkerboard buildings along 17th Street, which would be cleared for redevelopment following acquisition.

Executive Director Smith further explained that the budget also allocates non-taxable funding for CRA-owned parcels, including 330 Main Street, the Orpheum Theatre property, and an additional CRA-owned site. Other allocations include insurance for newly

acquired properties, legal expenses associated with acquisitions and development, and consulting services for renderings, engineering, and survey work related to CRA projects.

Executive Director Smith concluded by inviting questions from the Board regarding the \$18 million budget prior to consideration of the resolution for adoption.

Chairperson Greene opened and closed the public hearing. There were no comments.

MOTION was made by Board Member Mendez, seconded by Board Member Kelley to approve CRA Resolution No. 2026-03-R A RESOLUTION OF THE BARTOW COMMUNITY REDEVELOPMENT AGENCY RELATING TO FINANCE; AMENDING THE FISCAL YEAR 2025-2026 BUDGET PURSUANT TO THE UNIFORM SPECIAL DISTRICT ACCOUNTABILITY ACT TO MAKE ADDITIONAL APPROPRIATIONS; AUTHORIZING THE CRA EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR TO TAKE ALL ACTION NECESSARY TO COMPLETE THE APPROVAL PROCESS FOR THE FISCAL YEAR 2025-2026 BUDGET WITH THE CITY OF BARTOW, FLORIDA; PROVIDING FOR AN EFFECTIVE DATE.

VOTE TO THE MOTION:

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

NAY: None

Motion carried.

2. Review and take action to approve the Community Redevelopment Agency's Construction Manager at Risk, CMAR, Task Order with Rodda Construction, and the Project Budget to construct the CRA's Innovation Center.

Executive Director Smith explained that the contract outlines the scope of work for the Innovation Center located at 180 North Central Street. The project was awarded to Rodda Construction following a competitive CRP process in which five candidates submitted proposals. Grace Design Studios will provide design and technical support services.

The project includes a full renovation of the facility, construction of interior program offices, a multipurpose training room, and a meeting area. Planned site improvements include upgrades to utilities, installation of an ADA-compliant elevator, and enhancements to mechanical, electrical, and plumbing systems, along with other technical features to support the building's innovative functions.

Executive Director Smith stated that the project will be funded through the CRA's \$18 million bond allocation. The guaranteed maximum price (GMP) for construction is \$2,539,087, with an additional \$860,913 allocated for design services and equipment, bringing the total project budget to approximately \$3.4 million.

Executive Director Smith concluded by inviting questions from the Board regarding the construction budget or contract details.

A discussion was held regarding responsibility for issuing a stop work order. Board Member Santarlas asked whether such authority would rest with the property owner, the CRA, or the City of Bartow.

Executive Director Smith clarified that a stop work order would be initiated through the City's Building Department, with coordination from the project manager within Public Works, who oversees the project in consultation with the CRA's construction manager. He confirmed that any official stop work order would be issued by him, as Executive Director, in coordination with legal counsel.

Executive Director Smith further explained that regular meetings—held weekly or monthly—are scheduled to monitor project progress and address any issues in real time. Progress reports are tracked through a project management system that records billing, payment milestones, and completion percentages up to 90%.

Executive Director Smith noted that the project's guaranteed maximum price structure and the strong communication plan in place are designed to ensure the timely completion of the Innovation Center with all planned features and specifications.

Board Member Mendez inquired if there is a completion set yet.

Executive Director Smith stated that the full scope of work for the contract is expected to take approximately six months to complete, with an anticipated project duration of five to seven months, depending on progress. He clarified that this is a renovation project rather than new construction. He also noted for the record that the building plans were approved several months ago, and the project is now ready to move forward into the construction phase.

A discussion was held regarding the project scope and construction timeline. Questions were raised about whether a guaranteed maximum price (GMP) and a formal work schedule were included as part of the contract. Executive Director Smith confirmed that while the work schedule was not included in the materials presented at the meeting, it has been developed and will be provided to the Board following the meeting.

Further discussion addressed the inclusion of liquidated damages provisions in the contract to ensure the timely completion of the project. It was noted that such provisions are standard in projects of this nature and that the contract specifies a six-month completion timeline, with liquidated damages applicable for delays beyond that period.

CRA Counsel Cerullo noted that liquidated damages are addressed in Section 7 of the contract. She explained that while a specific completion date is not finalized until after the contract is approved, the clause ensures timely completion of the project. Once the contract is executed, the agreed-upon completion date will be established and incorporated into the agreement.

MOTION was made by Board Member Mendez, seconded by Board Member Bennett, to approve the Community Redevelopment Agency's Construction Manager at Risk, CMAR,

Task Order with Rodda Construction, and the Project Budget to construct the CRA's Innovation Center.

VOTE TO THE MOTION:

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

NAY: None

Motion carried.

COMMENTS:

1. EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Executive Director Smith gave a report of the following:

- **CRA Annual Report** – he noted that it provides a comprehensive overview of the work completed during the previous fiscal year. He explained that the report highlights ongoing and completed projects, outlines the allocation of grant funding—including design, business, and commercial enhancement grants—and reflects the CRA's overall progress and financial performance.

He expressed appreciation to the Board for its leadership and guidance, as well as to City Manager Herr and the City Commission for their continued support. Executive Director Smith emphasized that the report represents a collective achievement, showcasing the collaboration between staff, the Board, and City leadership.

He also stated that the full report is available on the CRA's website, as required under Chapter 163, Florida Statutes, and will be submitted to the Florida Department of Economic Opportunity. He noted that this year's report is among the strongest submitted to date, reflecting significant accomplishments and continued momentum in redevelopment efforts.

- **IMPACT Program** - Executive Director Smith announced plans to bring the CRA team together for a community IMPACT project later in the year. He stated that the initiative, tentatively scheduled for late June, aims to repair and refresh approximately 20 homes in a single day across West Bartow, Downtown Bartow, and East Bartow.

He noted that the event is planned for either June 20 or June 27, depending on weather conditions. Executive Director Smith invited Board members and community volunteers to participate in the project and contribute to its success.

- **Certificate of Service** – Executive Director Smith announced that this meeting would be Board Member Mendez's last with the CRA Board. He stated that while it was a bittersweet moment, it was a happy occasion, recognizing her contributions and commitment to the organization.

He noted that an email had been sent earlier notifying the Board of Ms. Mendez's departure from her role as a salaried commissioner. Executive Director Smith expressed his appreciation for her service, leadership, and dedication, and presented her with a Certificate of Appreciation. He stated that she will be presented with a small token of gratitude on behalf of the CRA at a later date.

Board Member Mendez expressed her gratitude to the Board, stating that it had been a pleasure and an honor to serve alongside them. She reflected on her time with the CRA, noting her excitement to see ongoing projects come to fruition and the continued progress being made in the community.

She shared that she has purchased a home and accepted a new position in St. Augustine but hopes to return in the future to visit and see the results of the CRA's efforts. She thanked the Board and staff for their support and collaboration.

2. CRA ATTORNEY

CRA Counsel Cerullo had nothing more to report.

3. CITY COMMISSIONER

City Manager Herr commented on Ms. Mendez's contributions, noting that her goal had always been to build a successful, long-term business presence in the downtown area. He acknowledged that the journey likely included challenges but commended her strategic thinking, strong leadership, and ability to create a successful business model that serves as an example for others.

City Manager Herr also expressed appreciation for her continued commitment to the community and thanked her for her leadership, dedication, and positive impact on the downtown business environment.

Commissioner Longworth, speaking on behalf of the City Commission, thanked Board Member Mendez for her continued dedication and service. He expressed appreciation for her efforts and extended his best wishes and blessings for continued success moving forward.

4. BOARD MEMBERS

- **Anthony Ghent**

Vice Chairperson Ghent expressed appreciation to staff for their dedication and consistent communication with the Board. He acknowledged the tireless effort that goes into keeping the Board informed and ensuring that projects continue moving in the right direction, stating that their work and commitment are greatly valued.

Vice Chairperson Ghent expressed appreciation to Ms. Sandy for her dedication and hard work, noting that she has been deeply involved "in the trenches" and fully committed to the organization's mission. He thanked her for her efforts, guidance,

and the support she has provided to both the Board and staff. He added that the Board is willing to assist in any way needed and wished her continued success in the future.

- **Sandy Mendez**

Board Member Mendez expressed her appreciation for the kind words shared, noting that they were both emotional and heartfelt. She remarked that the presentation was well done and commended everyone who contributed their time and effort to the project.

- **Tom Santarlas**

Board Member Santarlas stated that it has been an honor to serve on the Board with Ms. Mendez and an even greater privilege to call her a friend. He commended her for the positive impact she has made through her dedicated service and successful business efforts. He expressed that she will be greatly missed and wished her continued success in her future endeavors.

- **Shana Bennett**

Board Member Bennett had nothing to report.

- **Jerome Corbett**

Board Member Corbett stated that it had been a pleasure working with Ms. Mendez. He added that she should not be surprised if she sees him in St. Augustine, as it is a special place for him and was the location of his honeymoon.

Board Member Mendez shared that she will be living one mile from the beach and working at the Westcott Bay Front Bed and Breakfast in St. Augustine.

- **Cheri Kelley**

Board Member Kelley commended staff on the excellent presentation of the Annual Report, stating that it was well-designed, informative, and a strong reflection of the CRA's accomplishments. She expressed excitement and pride in the progress made over the past year and gratitude to be part of the organization's continued success.

Board Member Kelley also thanked Board Member Mendez for her service, stating that it had been a joy working with her, and encouraged her to stay in touch and visit when she is back in town.

- **Gordon Greene**

Chairperson Greene stated that the Annual Report clearly reflects the significant effort and dedication put forth by staff and the Board. He noted that while previous directors

and board members have also worked hard, the visibility and impact of those efforts are now much more apparent to the community.

Chairperson Greene commended the report's quality and presentation, describing it as the best the CRA has produced to date. Chairperson Greene added that both the report's content and the future plans outlined within demonstrate thoughtful planning and visible progress, expressing appreciation for the continued hard work and commitment that are driving meaningful results in the CRA district.

NEXT MEETING: Wednesday, March 25, 2026, at 8:30 a.m.

Chairperson Greene announced that the next Regular Meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, March 25, 2026, at 8:30 a.m.

ADJOURNMENT

With no further business to discuss, Vice Chairperson Ghent adjourned the meeting at 8:58 a.m.

CHAIRPERSON GORDON GREENE

ATTEST:

ASST. CITY CLERK DONNA DONALDSON

(SEAL)

FINANCIAL REPORT

CITY OF BARTOW
 REVENUE AND EXPENSE REPORT - UNAUDITED
 AS OF: MARCH 31ST, 2026

111-CRA
 FINANCIAL SUMMARY

REVENUE SUMMARY	CURRENT BUDGET	CURRENT PERIOD	PERIOD BUDGET	Y-T-D ACTUAL	Y-T-D BUDGET	BUDGET BALANCE	BUDGET
<u>TAXES</u>							
AD VALOREM TAXES	<u>2,730,108.00</u>	<u>0.00</u>	<u>227,509.00</u>	<u>2,699,808.06</u>	<u>1,365,054.00</u>	<u>30,299.94</u>	<u>98.89</u>
TOTAL TAXES	2,730,108.00	0.00	227,509.00	2,699,808.06	1,365,054.00	30,299.94	0.00
<u>INTERGOVERNMENTAL REV.</u>							
FEDERAL GRANTS	<u>0.00</u>	<u>0.00</u>	<u>0.00</u>	<u>0.00</u>	<u>0.00</u>	<u>0.00</u>	<u>0.00</u>
TOTAL INTERGOVERNMENTAL REV.	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
<u>CHARGES FOR SERVICES</u>							
GEN. GOV. (NOT COURT REL)	<u>0.00</u>	<u>0.00</u>	<u>0.00</u>	<u>0.00</u>	<u>0.00</u>	<u>0.00</u>	<u>0.00</u>
TOTAL CHARGES FOR SERVICES	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
<u>MISCELLANEOUS REVENUE</u>							
INTEREST	0.00	0.00	0.00	20,745.09	0.00	(20,745.09)	0.00
PROPERTY RENTAL	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
DISP. OF FIXED ASSETS	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
CONTRIBUTION & DONATIONS	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
OTHER MISC. REVENUE	<u>0.00</u>	<u>0.00</u>	<u>0.00</u>	<u>9,000.00</u>	<u>0.00</u>	(<u>9,000.00</u>)	<u>0.00</u>
TOTAL MISCELLANEOUS REVENUE	0.00	0.00	0.00	29,745.09	0.00	(29,745.09)	0.00
<u>OTHER SOURCES</u>							
INSTALLMENT PURCH./LEASE	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
DEBT PROCEEDS	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
NONOPERATING SOURCES	<u>0.00</u>	<u>0.00</u>	<u>0.00</u>	<u>0.00</u>	<u>0.00</u>	<u>0.00</u>	<u>0.00</u>
TOTAL OTHER SOURCES	<u>0.00</u>	<u>0.00</u>	<u>0.00</u>	<u>0.00</u>	<u>0.00</u>	<u>0.00</u>	<u>0.00</u>
*** TOTAL REVENUES ***	<u>2,730,108.00</u>	<u>0.00</u>	<u>227,509.00</u>	<u>2,729,553.15</u>	<u>1,365,054.00</u>	<u>554.85</u>	<u>0.00</u>

C I T Y O F B A R T O W
 REVENUE AND EXPENSE REPORT - UNAUDITED
 AS OF: MARCH 31ST, 2026

111-CRA
 FINANCIAL SUMMARY

EXPENDITURE SUMMARY	CURRENT BUDGET	CURRENT PERIOD	PRIOR YEAR PO ADJUST.	Y-T-D ACTUAL	TOTAL ENCUMBRANCE	BALANCE BUDGET	% OF
<u>ECONOMIC ENVIRONMENT</u>							
CRA	<u>4,646,938.00</u>	<u>94,994.03</u>	<u>0.00</u>	<u>327,827.74</u>	<u>382,727.74</u> (<u>4,264,210.26</u>)		<u>8.24</u>
TOTAL ECONOMIC ENVIRONMENT	<u>4,646,938.00</u>	<u>94,994.03</u>	<u>0.00</u>	<u>327,827.74</u>	<u>54,900.00</u> (<u>4,264,210.26</u>)		<u>8.24</u>
*** TOTAL EXPENDITURES ***	4,646,938.00	94,994.03	0.00	327,827.74	54,900.00 (4,264,210.26)		8.24
	=====	=====	=====	=====	=====		=====
** REVENUE OVER (UNDER) EXPENDITURES *	(1,916,830.00)	(94,994.03)		2,401,725.41	(4,263,655.41)		
	=====	=====		=====	=====		

C I T Y O F B A R T O W
 REVENUE AND EXPENSE REPORT - UNAUDITED
 AS OF: MARCH 31ST, 2026

111-CRA
 FINANCIAL SUMMARY

REVENUES	CURRENT BUDGET	CURRENT PERIOD	PERIOD BUDGET	Y-T-D ACTUAL	Y-T-D BUDGET	BUDGET BALANCE	BUDGET
<u>CONTRIBUTION & DONATIONS</u>							
366001-000-000 DONATIONS	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
TOTAL CONTRIBUTION & DONATIONS	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
<u>OTHER MISC. REVENUE</u>							
369100-000-000 MISCELLANEOUS REVENUE	0.00	0.00	0.00	9,000.00	0.00	(9,000.00)	0.00
TOTAL OTHER MISC. REVENUE	0.00	0.00	0.00	9,000.00	0.00	(9,000.00)	0.00
TOTAL MISCELLANEOUS REVENUE	0.00	0.00	0.00	29,745.09	0.00	(29,745.09)	0.00
<u>OTHER SOURCES</u>							
<u>INSTALLMENT PURCH./LEASE</u>							
383000-000-000 LOAN PROCEEDS	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
TOTAL INSTALLMENT PURCH./LEASE	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
<u>DEBT PROCEEDS</u>							
384000-000-000 DEBT PROCEEDS	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
384000-002-000 LEASE PROCEEDS	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
TOTAL DEBT PROCEEDS	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
<u>NONOPERATING SOURCES</u>							
389930-000-000 LOAN REPAYMENT (ADJ A	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
TOTAL NONOPERATING SOURCES	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
TOTAL OTHER SOURCES	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
<hr/>							
TOTAL REVENUE	2,730,108.00	0.00	227,509.00	2,729,553.15	1,365,054.00	554.85	0.00

C I T Y O F B A R T O W
 REVENUE AND EXPENSE REPORT - UNAUDITED
 AS OF: MARCH 31ST, 2026

111-CRA
 ECONOMIC ENVIRONMENT
 CRA

EXPENDITURES	CURRENT BUDGET	CURRENT PERIOD	PRIOR YEAR PO ADJUST.	Y-T-D ACTUAL	TOTAL ENCUMBRANCE	BUDGET BALANCE	BUDGET
TOTAL CRA	4,646,938.00	94,994.03	0.00	327,827.74	54,900.00 (4,264,210.26)		8.24
<hr/>							
** TOTAL ECONOMIC ENVIRONMENT	4,646,938.00	94,994.03	0.00	327,827.74	54,900.00 (4,264,210.26)		8.24
*** TOTAL EXPENDITURES ***	4,646,938.00	94,994.03	0.00	327,827.74	54,900.00 (4,264,210.26)		8.24
<hr/>							
*** PROOF TOTALS ***							
TOTAL REVENUES	2,730,108.00	0.00	0.00	2,729,553.15	0.00	554.85	99.98
TOTAL EXPENSES	4,646,938.00	94,994.03	0.00	327,827.74	54,900.00 (4,264,210.26)		8.24
<hr/>							
*** END OF REPORT ***							

NEW BUSINESS

GENERAL INFORMATION

Request: Discussion and Update on the Service Agreement with Main Street Bartow

STAFF ANALYSIS

The purpose of this item is to provide an updated from Main Street Bartow as a part of the Services Agreement with the Community Redevelopment Agency, CRA.

As outlined in the Master Service Agreement, MSB is responsible for managing and implementing programs and services that support downtown businesses, including maintaining accurate and up-to-date inventories of properties and active businesses. These datasets will provide the CRA with critical information to guide policy decisions, target incentives, and track economic trends such as vacancies, business turnover, and growth opportunities.

Additionally, MSB serves as a central liaison between business owners, property owners, and the CRA, ensuring consistent communication and increased awareness of available grant programs, incentives, and redevelopment opportunities. This function is essential in improving participation in CRA programs and facilitating private investment within the district.

As outlined in the service agreement, MSB will provide semi-annual reports and updates to the CRA Board, ensuring accountability, transparency, and the ability to measure program effectiveness. Overall, the agreement established clear expectations and deliverables that align with the CRA’s mission to promote sustainable economic growth and revitalization within the district.

AVAILABILITY OF FUNDS

Funds are available in the CRA’s Fiscal Year 2024-2025 budgeted line item 559201-334- Main Street Bartow

RECOMMENDATION

None

ATTACHMENT

- Exhibit- A Main Street Matters 2026
- Exhibit- B CRA Progress Report
- Exhibit- C City Report 2026



Main Street Matters 2026

Annual Status Report

April 1, 2026

Organization Mission: The Mission of Main Street Bartow, Inc. is to enhance, preserve, and support economic development in the downtown historic district.

Oversight, accreditation, affiliation, award winning: Now in its 41st year, Main Street Bartow, Inc. is a designated Florida Main Street Program, receiving its original designation in 1986. The Florida Main Street Program is administered by the Division of Historical Resources under the Florida Department of State. Main Street Bartow, Inc., is in an annual Letter of Agreement with Florida Main Street.

Main Street Bartow, Inc. is State and a Nationally Accredited program through Florida Main Street and the National Main Street Center, accreditation was originally awarded in 2015, the first for Bartow's Main Street. The program continues to maintain its accreditation.

Scope of Work for 2025-2026:

- **Maintain Available Property Inventory:** Maintain an online listing of available property, to ease dissemination of information to potential businesses relocating to the district or property investors. As of April 1, 2026, there are 15 properties listed, some being multiple spaces available. 2 waiting on information on.
- **Attract new businesses to Main Street Bartow, with a focus on industries that will serve as destination locations after work and on the weekends.**
 - Niche retailers (boutiques, novelties)
 - Restaurants and pubs with entertaining atmosphere and full liquor
 - Educate the public about the City's historic properties and preservation efforts.

• *To date...12 new investors - 4 new retail businesses, 2 restaurant/catering/bakery/snacks, 6 new services related businesses since September*

- **Investing in the organization to conduct the following:**

- Encouraging building renovations or rehabilitation of the buildings within the Main Street Bartow, Inc. program area by new or current property owners.
- Assist property owners, in the Main Street Bartow, Inc. program area, through the application process for preservation and restoration efforts.

As in the item above, Main Street Bartow, Inc. offers assistance with the CRA grant applications (especially with out-of-town property owners).

- Compile quarterly data for the Main Street Bartow, Inc., program area in the following focus categories:
 - Public and Private investment in the program area for new construction, building rehabilitation, and infrastructure
 - Businesses entering and exiting the program area and jobs gained or lost
 - Residential units in the program area
 - Building occupancy vs. vacancy rate
 - Calculate average rental rate

Residential units in the program area, building occupancy vs. vacancy rate, and Calculate average rental rate will be assessed and reported in the next report to the State of Florida (4/31/2026), based on final list of available properties on the Available Properties Inventory at the end of the month.

- Report quarterly findings to the Florida Secretary of State to assess the overall economic impact of the Main Street Bartow, Inc. program area.
- Educate the public of preservation efforts and economic impact of the Main Street Bartow, Inc. program area.

- *Submit monthly press releases to local media highlighting new businesses, economic development efforts downtown, and upcoming promotional activities.*
- *One on one conversation to potential new organization investors.*
- *Downtown business outreach and one on one visits*
- *Monthly newsletter*

- Establish dialogue with business and property owners throughout the Main Street Bartow, Inc. program area.
- The design committee continues to work on making the downtown area more aesthetically appealing with the addition or updating of way finding signs, wall murals, Pole banners,

flowerpots, flower bed landscaping, Downtown Street lighting.

- **Create promotional campaigns for the downtown with the purpose of attracting new business and customers as well as aiding business growth and retention within the downtown corridor.**
 - Create education opportunities for existing businesses to help with business success and longevity.
 - Special promotions to attract residents and non-residents to the downtown area, tracking attendance and business impact.
 - Host activities and promotions that increase sales and return revenues to the district as well as create opportunities for residents to connect with downtown as the 'heart of the community'.
 - Activities such as: (not inclusive)
 - Bartow Christmas Parade – held annually in December, Main Street Bartow hosts approximately 120 local entries and coordinates a downtown celebration of the holidays. Estimated attendance along the parade route and the festivities on Main Street are more than 10,000 people. The 2026 parade will be the 35th year.
 - Honeybee Craft Fair – held annually, welcoming over 18,000 visitors, we host 140 crafters and antique vendors to showcase downtown retailers and to create an attraction for both locals and guests to Bartow.
 - Friday Fest – Held monthly, Friday Fest is to showcase downtown merchants and vendors and attract residents to the downtown corridor.
 - Antique Market- Held 2nd Saturday, the market is to showcase downtown merchants and attract residents and guests to the downtown corridor.
 - Chalk Walk-Held Annually, features approximately 25 chalk artists creating chalk art in Downtown to create an attraction for locals and guest for Bartow. Chalk Walk also brings approximately 25 vendors and has an estimated attendance of 4,000 people.
 - Cycling activities- Held in the spring and the fall, to showcase downtown retailers and to create an attraction for both locals and guests to Bartow.
 - Fancy Flea- Will host 75+ vendors to showcase downtown retailers and to create an attraction for both locals and guests to Bartow, held April and December.
 - Seasonal Promotions- Fall Festival, Spring Fling, Mistletoe Market, held annually along Summerlin St., the festivals host 100+ crafters to showcase downtown retailers and to create an attraction for both locals and guests to Bartow attendance for each brings in approximately 5,000-6,000 people to the Downtown. The Spring event also features a BBQ rib

competition and entertainment, in 2026 will add mutts and margaritas which will feature pet vendors and local rescues.

- Uncorked Wine Stroll in February and the Sparkling Wine Stroll in January, each bringing 350 guests to not only the Downtown but directly into the businesses.
- Bartow Halloween Parade – held annually in October, Main Street Bartow hosts approximately 75 local entries and is the kickoff to the community carnival held at Mosaic Park.
- Trick or Treat Trail, near Halloween, brings approximately 250 plus families to Downtown to trick or treat at our local businesses, ends with a movie on the lawn, pet and kids costume contest.
- Assist organizations that wish to hold activities downtown, (Jeepin w/ Judd, Bloomin Arts, African American Heritage Museum,
- Promotions to assist Downtown Merchants and to attract residents and guests to the Downtown corridor Small Business Saturday and Shop Local, Community Wide Sidewalk Sale in July.
- Adding 3 5k runs in 2026, Spring, Fall, and Winter.
- Currently working on a jazz festival for 2027.
- Overseeing the CRA Marketing program which will provide funding to business that need marketing to help with business retention.

Approx.. 37 plus activities and promotions during the year bringing over 115,000 + people to the Downtown.

• Website with added elements to help promote downtown more effectively.

Over the last 30 days, the website saw 5,950 visitors (up 934) 4,607 ad clicks & 30,406 social views

- ◇ About Main Street
- ◇ event calendar
- ◇ event descriptions & applications
- ◇ members, sponsors
- ◇ where to shop
- ◇ where to eat
- ◇ downtown properties

• Maintain a social media presence that highlights the community and business culture of the Main Street Bartow, Inc. program area.

Our social media engagements in the last 28 days Our Facebook following is 16,334 (up 9%) views 316,365 (increased 21,789), engagement 21,495 (up 52.4%)

Main Street Bartow, Inc. will continue to work to enhance, preserve, and support economic development in the downtown historic district.



Prepared and reported by

Linda K. Holcomb, Executive Director
Main Street Bartow, Inc.
PO Box 1351, Bartow, FL 33831
863-519-0508 Phone
Lholcomb@mainstreetbartowfl.com

CRA Progress Report

Good morning,

We continue to Maintain our FMS Accreditation and we are also accredited through National Main Street.

We report quarterly to FMS on new & closed businesses, money invested in the Downtown, employment Downtown, volunteer hours, successes and frustrations of the Downtown.

We continue to work to attract new businesses to Main Street Bartow, with a focus on industries that will serve as destination locations after work hours and on the weekends

From our calendar year, September 2025 through April 1 2026, 12 New Investors in the Downtown.

4 retail-

- Paradise Bins
- Florida Coating Supply
- Arts in Resin
- AT&T

2 restaurants/bakery/catering/bar/snack

- Blue Ridge Grill
- Twisted n' Knots

6- Services

- Jazzercise Bartow
- Sterling Ranch Event Venue
- The Digital Sphere/Tech Me Up
- Cardinal Academy of Real Estate
- Illusion Auto Detailing
- Bar Babez Fitness

Per our contract with the CRA of a 1-year Free membership to new Main Street District storefront businesses- The Digital Sphere/Tech Me Up, Cardinal Academy of Real Estate

Our design committee continues to work on making the downtown area more aesthetically appealing with the addition of or updating of way finding signs, wall murals, flowerpots, Downtown Street lighting.

We have been working to attract residents and visitors to the Downtown area through retail sales, advertising, marketing, public relations and our special events. We are managing a growing number of activities and promotions designed to bring

people Downtown to experience Bartow and hopefully foster a desire to return and shop or dine in Bartow, these activities and promotions also communicate progress and excitement, attracting more investors.

Activities/Promotions

Monthly events

- Friday Fest every 3rd Friday (excluding June, July & December)
- Antique Market- 2nd Saturday of each month.

In additional to the monthly Friday Fest and Antique Market we have

The DT Annual Activities & Promotions

- January- Sparkling Wine Stroll
- February – Jeepin with Judd Show & Shine
- March- Bloomin Bike Ride
- April- Spring Fling & BBQ
- June- Sip & Stroll
- July- Citywide Sidewalk Sale

- September- Tour de Tow Bike Ride
- September- Fall Festival
- October- Bartoberfest-
Trick or Treat Trail
Halloween Parade
- November-
Honey Bee Craft Fair and the Chalk Walk
Magic on Main
Shop Small, Buy Local campaign
Shop Small Business Saturday
- December
Christmas Parade
Mistletoe Market

**Approximately 37 Activities and Promotions this year bringing
and estimated 115,000+ people**

Partnering Activities and Activities

- African American Heritage Museum events
- Ole' Bartow Farmers Market

- Bloomin' Arts
- Fancy Flea
- Chamber of Commerce -Shop Small Promotion & Sidewalk Sale

3 - 5K runs to be added in the Spring, Fall and Winter

Currently working on a jazz festival for February 20, 2027.

Social Media To advertise events, promotions, business and community

- Facebook & boost for events and promotions.
- Individual business awareness (sharing of Facebook posts of Downtown Businesses members).
- Promoting Community happenings on Main Street Facebook page, Instagram and in our newsletter.

Additional Social Media platforms

Linked In

Based on the last 28 days

Our Facebook following is 16,334 (up 9%) views

316,365 (up 21,789), engagement 21,495 (up 52.4%)

Audience is 20.80% men, 79.20% women.

Top cities, Bartow, Lakeland, Winter Haven

Smaller reach, Highland city, Brandon, Fort Meade,

Lake Wales, Eagle Lake, Auburndale, Mulberry,
Lakeland Highlands

While activities and promotions help bring customers to town, we also work to keep our businesses, property owners and community informed on community information.

- Yearly Calendar of activity handouts for Downtown Businesses, posted on social media, Displayed throughout town.
- Handout of List of Downtown businesses & walking maps.
- Monthly newsletter that spotlights Downtown activities as well as Community happenings.
- Emails to businesses.
- We provide design services to Main Street members as well as social media & tech assistance.
- Quarterly education seminars were held September 2 from 5-6 at Zest on Fraud and IT, December 2, 8am-9am at Sweet Magnolias on Financial Planning. August 7 at Idlewood was a mixer for all Main Street members and Howard spoke on the CRA. We are currently setting up seminars for 2026.
- Every quarter we visit other cities downtowns for ideas to improve ours, recently visited Dunellen and Winter

Garden, Mount Dora is scheduled for April and then Dade City.

We serve as a liaison between new and existing merchants and the property owners in downtown and the CRA to help grant information to new and existing businesses and property owners within Downtown Bartow; we assist property owners in the application process for preservation and restoration efforts for their buildings in Downtown Bartow.

We are also a liaison to Parks & Rec., Electric Department, Public Works, Solid Waste and the Police Department for any issues that need to be addressed Downtown.

Website- about Main Street and Mission

- Property locator site updated as new businesses come up for sale or lease or are sold. Currently 15 listed with some being multiple offices, with 2 waiting on info on, link is also provided to the BEDC.
- Category directory of all Main Street Members.
- Calendar of events and promotions.
- Shop Downtown Retail member page

- Shop Downtown Restaurant page
- Link to City Partners

In the last 30 days- 5,950 Site visitors, 4,607 ad clicks, 30,406 social views

In addition to the Downtown, we believe in giving back to the community and thanking those that go above and beyond to help make Downtown & Bartow special.

Thank you, pizza party, for City workers.

Thank you party for Main Street volunteers.

Feeding First responders that come to Bartow in our time of need (after Hurricanes).

Salute to our Hometown Heroes at the May Friday Fest

Thru our cycling events, we have donated bikes to newly adopted kids through Heartland for Children.



Over the past 21 years, MSB has developed and managed a growing number of events designed to bring people downtown to experience Bartow and hopefully foster a desire to return and shop/dine in Bartow. MSB will continue to strive to grow existing events and activities as well as add new ones to provide the best chance of bringing new visitors and getting them to return and do business in Bartow increasing the “feet on the street” of downtown Bartow, the overall purpose of all marketing and programming efforts.

Notable Community Events For Main Street Bartow

January Sparkling Wine Stroll

Visit Downtown shops, businesses & restaurants for a sampling of wines paired with bites. You could also be the lucky winner of the Diamond from Spath Jewelers.



January Friday Fest– Ahoy Matey!

Pirates land in town, batten down the hatches and come join the party! Vendors, car show, band.



February Friday Fest– Fur-tastic Pets

All about Pets– Rescues, Vendors, Adoptions, Services, Car show, music, Costume contest.



February – Jeepin with Judd

Partnered with PCSO to host the Friday Night Jeep Show, kicking off the weekend of Jeepin’ With Judd. Est. 6000 attendees.



March Friday Fest– The UnParade

Engaging the community with fun entertaining events, the unusual, unpredictable, happily unorganized, wackier the better Unparade has provided the citizens an evening of entertainment and filled the streets of downtown Bartow for over 30 years. It is a favorite local tradition with its impromptu nature making it a different experience each and every year. The wild and wacky parade features anything and everything from floats, walkers, golf carts, Irish belly dancers, a mutt strutt. The parade goes through the downtown and ends on Main Street and is followed by live music, entertainers, delicious food and a car show.



March Bloomin Bike Ride

Annual Spring bike ride featuring 3 various courses (17, 36, and 63 mile courses). 200 riders



March Bloomin' Arts—Co Presenter

Annual Fine Arts & Crafts, car show, Garden Club host show inside the Main Street office. Est. 18,000 attendees



April Friday Fest— Bartow Idol

Bartow's version of American Idol, contestants try out for two weeks prior, top 10 perform at Friday Fest and top three win.



April- Spring Fling & BBQ Festival

Annual Spring Festival, brings awareness to our businesses one block off Main Street,



April— Fancy Flea— Co Presenter

Voted one of the top vintage markets in the country! Promotes restaurants and retailers for shopping and dining. Est. attendance 5,000



May Friday Fest— Salute to Hometown Heroes

Recognizes our First Responders, these are the groups that help the city in our time of need, Bartow Police Department, Bartow Fire Department, Polk County EMS, Polk County Sheriff's Office, Bartow Electric Department, Bartow Public Works, Leisure Services .



June-Bartow Uncorked Wine Walk

Visit Downtown shops, businesses & restaurants for a sampling of wines paired with bites. 300 attendees



August Friday Fest - Back to School

Vendors, Services
Car show, music, collection for Back to School.



September- Tour De Tow

Annual fall bike ride featuring 3 various courses (17, 36, and 63 mile courses). 200 riders



July- City Wide Sidewalk Sale

Bartow's biggest city-wide sidewalk sale, held in July to help increase business during the slowest month. Moffitt Day of Health held in conjunction.



September Friday Fest

Have a boot scootin' good time with vendors, games, car show and a live band.



September- Fall Festival

Annual Fall Festival, to bring awareness to our businesses one block off Main Street and Promote Main Street Bartow restaurants and retailers for shopping. Est. 6000 attendees



November Shop Small Saturday

Shop Small Saturday promotes Main Street Bartow restaurants and retailers for shopping on the national recognized Small Business Saturday. Est. 500– 1000



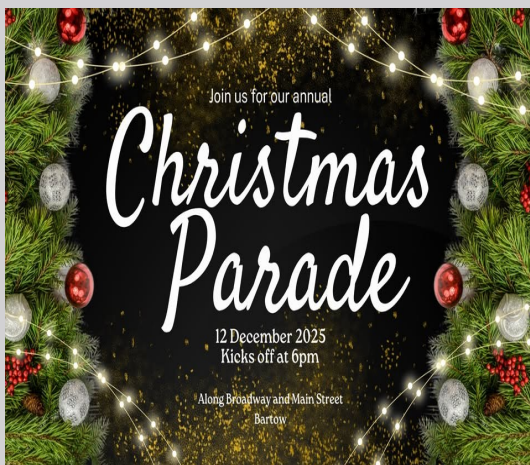
Buy Bartow Red Ticket Campaign

New initiative in partnership with the Bartow Chamber of Commerce to urge people to spend locally during the holiday shopping months of November & December. Receive a ticket for every \$10 spent for a chance to win prizes.



December Christmas Parade

Magical Illumination Christmas Parade featuring holiday lights, arrival of Santa. Est. 10,000 attendees



December- Mistletoe Market

Annual Mistletoe Market, to bring awareness to our businesses one block off Main Street and Promote Main Street Bartow restaurants and retailers for shopping. Est. 5000 attendees.



Monthly Antique Market

Held monthly, on the 2nd Saturday of each month, along Main Street sidewalks. 200-400 attendees.



37 plus events during the year with an Estimated attendees' to events, 115,000 +

Main Street Bartow continues to add additional activities.

- Merchant promotions as desired
- Community partnered events
- 3 5k runs to be added in April, September & December
- Jazz Festival coming in 2027

Additional Services Main Street Bartow Provides

- Maintains Available Property Inventory: Maintains an online listing of available property to potential businesses relocating to the district or property investors. As of April 1, 2026, there are 14 properties listed some being multiple spaces available.
- Assist property owners, in the Main Street Bartow, Inc. program area, through the application process for preservation and restoration efforts.
- Continue to attract new businesses to Main Street Bartow, with a focus on industries that will serve as destination locations after work hours and on the weekends.



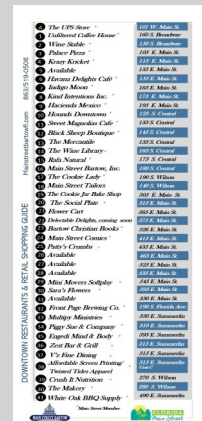
- One on one conversation to potential new organization investors.
- Downtown business outreach and one on one visits
- Continues to work on making the downtown more aesthetically appealing: wall murals, Pole banners, flower pots, flower bed landscaping, Downtown street lighting.
- Create education opportunities for existing businesses to help with business success and longevity-



- Create promotional campaigns for the downtown with the purpose of attracting new business and customers as well as aiding business growth and retention within the downtown corridor.
- Maintains a social media presence that highlights the community and business culture of the Main Street Bartow, Inc. program area.
- Business Support & City Marketing, while events help bring customers to town, we also work to keep our business and property owners informed. Our social media engagements in the last 28 days 16,334 followers (up 9%) and with 316,365 views (up 21,789)and 21,495 engagement (up 52.4%).
- Monthly newsletter that spotlights Downtown activities as well as Community events.
- New Business welcome gift and Downtown information packet
- Monthly press releases to local media highlighting new businesses, economic development efforts downtown, and upcoming promotional activities.



- Yearly Calendar of events handouts for Downtown Businesses
- Handout of List of Downtown businesses & walking maps
- Website with added elements to help promote downtown more effectively. Over the last 30 days, the website saw 5,950 visitors (up 934) 4,607 ad clicks, 30,406 social views
 - ◊ About Main Street
 - ◊ event calendar
 - ◊ event descriptions & applications
 - ◊ members, sponsors
 - ◊ where to shop
 - ◊ where to eat
 - ◊ downtown properties



Additional Services Main Street Bartow Provides

Report quarterly findings to the Florida Secretary of State to assess the overall economic impact of the Main Street Bartow, Inc. program area.

Public and Private investment in the program area for new construction, building rehabilitation, and infrastructure.
Businesses entering and exiting the program area and jobs gained or lost.

Residential units in the program area

Building occupancy vs. vacancy rate

Calculate average rental rate.

Effective Working Relationships: Community Partners

1. Well defined working relationship between City of Bartow and Bartow CRA
2. Regular reporting and communications between the City of Bartow and Bartow CRA
3. Businesses' and residents' understanding the value of the Bartow CRA and its contribution to Bartow's success as a community

Main Street Bartow, Inc. continues to work to enhance, preserve, and support economic development in the downtown historic district

Organization Mission:

The Mission of Main Street Bartow, Inc. is to enhance, preserve, and support economic development in the downtown historic district.

Oversight, accreditation, affiliation, award winning:

Now in its 41st year, Main Street Bartow, Inc. is a designated Florida Main Street Program, receiving its original designation in 1986

Main Street Bartow, Inc. is also a Nationally Accredited program through the National Main Street Center, accreditation was originally awarded in 2015, the first for Bartow's Main Street. The program continues to maintain its accreditation.

From September 1, 2025– April 1, 2026

- *12 new investors*

- *4 new retail businesses*
- *2 restaurant/catering/bakery/snacks*
- *6 new services related businesses*



GENERAL INFORMATION

Request: Review and Take Action to approve an annual Service Agreement with Main Street Bartow

STAFF ANALYSIS

The purpose of this item is to review and take action on Main Street Bartow Services Agreement with the Community Redevelopment Agency, CRA, that provides a comprehensive framework for services.

Main Street Bartow provides unique, place based services that directly support the CRA's redevelopment goals. Through coordinated programming, stakeholder engagement, and proactive business support, MSB enhances the economic viability and visual identity of Downtown Bartow. The inclusion of structured data collection (property and business inventories) improves the CRA's ability to make informed decisions, track redevelopment progress, and target incentives effectively. Additionally, the Banner Program and collaborative marketing efforts contribute to placemaking and increased foot traffic within the district.

BACKGROUND

The CRA has identified the continued need for structured downtown management services that align with its redevelopment goals, including business retention, property activation, and placemaking initiatives. This Services Agreement formalizes MSB's role in delivering targeted programs and services that directly support economic revitalization efforts within the CRA District.

CONTRACT SCOPE OF SERVICES

Pursuant to this Master Agreement, MSB shall provide key services that include but are limited to:

Downtown Management & Economic Vitality

- Develop, produce, coordinate, and manage programs and activities that preserve and improve Bartow's Central Business District, supporting economic revitalization across restaurants, boutiques, cafes, antique shops, salons, gift and home décor stores, and other commercial businesses.

Property & Business Inventory Management

- Develop, maintain, and update (semi-annually) a comprehensive inventory of downtown properties, including property address, ownership, contact information, building characteristics, and lot size.
- Provide semi-annual reports to the CRA identifying property ownership, contact details, and occupancy status (vacant or occupied).

Business & Stakeholder Coordination

- Serve as a liaison between property owners, existing and prospective businesses, and the CRA to facilitate communication and promote available grant and incentive programs.
- Assist property owners with applications related to building preservation and restoration efforts.

Business Support Services

- Provide new businesses in Downtown Bartow with one (1) year of complimentary MSB membership, offering access to resources, marketing, and support services.

Partnerships & Promotion

- Collaborate with key stakeholders, including the Bartow Economic Development Council, the Bartow Chamber of Commerce, and City officials to implement marketing campaigns that position Downtown Bartow as a destination.

Reporting & Accountability

- Provide semi-annual updates to the CRA Board outlining MSB activities, program outcomes, and progress toward downtown revitalization goals.

Downtown Banner Program

- Develop, manage, and implement a Downtown Banner Program at no cost to business merchants, designed to enhance the visual appeal and identity of the district.
- Oversee all aspects of the program, including conceptual design, fabrication, branding alignment, and thematic development reflective of the CRA, City, and MSB.
- Administer program logistics, including vendor coordination, inventory management, and compliance with applicable city regulations and safety standards.

AVAILABILITY OF FUNDS

Funding for this agreement is allocated within the CRA's Amended Fiscal Year 2025-2026 budget under the Contractual Services Line item 559201-334-900 Main Street Bartow

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

The partnership with Main Street Bartow represents a strategic investment in the continued revitalization of Downtown Bartow. The services outlined will strengthen business retention, support new development, and enhance the overall vibrancy of the Central Business District.

Staff recommend approval of the Service Agreement with Main Street Bartow for a twelve (12) month term through April 2027 to provide downtown management, economic development support, and placemaking services within the CRA district.

Attachment

Exhibit A- MSB Service Agreement

**BARTOW COMMUNITY REDEVELOPMENT AGENCY
MASTER REDEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE AGREEMENT**

This *Master Redevelopment Assistance Agreement* (“Master Agreement” or “Agreement”), effective April 1, 2026 (“Effective Date”) is made between the Bartow Community Redevelopment Agency, a Florida community redevelopment agency and dependent special district chartered by the City of Bartow, Florida (“Bartow CRA” or “CRA”) and the following individual, firm, association, joint adventure, partnership, estate, trust, business trust, syndicate, fiduciary, corporation, or other group or combination competent to execute agreements under Florida law:

Name and Mailing Address:

**Main Street Bartow, Inc.
C/O Linda Holcomb
180 South Central Avenue
Bartow, Florida 33830**

(“MSB” or “Recipient”).

WITNESSETH:

WHEREAS, the Bartow CRA is organized under Part III of Chapter 163, Florida Statutes and Ordinance 1547-A of the City of Bartow to advance the purposes contained therein within the areas designated and identified by the active community redevelopment plan of the City of Bartow, Florida as of the Effective Date; and

WHEREAS, the CRA has the authority under § 163.370(2)(e) 6., Florida Statutes to “enter into any contracts necessary to effectuate [community redevelopment purposes]”, and the authority under § 163.370(2)(1), Florida Statutes to “appropriate such funds and make such expenditures as are necessary to carry out [community redevelopment purposes]”; and

WHEREAS, MSB has submitted a proposed Scope of Work to the CRA for review, such scope being fully articulated herein, and such proposal has been determined by the CRA’s Board of Commissioners to be consistent with the Bartow CRA’s active community redevelopment plan, and eligible for funding under the Bartow CRA’s active increment revenue trust fund funding policies; and

WHEREAS, the purpose of this Master Agreement is to articulate the terms and conditions for the provision of financial assistance by the Bartow CRA to MSB from lawfully appropriated increment revenue in the Bartow CRA’s redevelopment trust fund for the Scope of Work herein (the “Project”), including, but not limited to, the activity to be undertaken by MSB, the applicable funding program requirements and rules promulgated by the Bartow CRA, the expected deliverables to be generated by MSB as part of its project or activity and timetable for delivery the same; and

WHEREAS, the Community Redevelopment Agency’s Board of Commissioners has determined that providing funding to MSB for the Project through this Master Agreement, in an amount not to exceed \$60,000, is in furtherance of the goals and objectives of the community redevelopment plan, is a prudent use of CRA funds for unique and specific services, and partially underwrite the costs of administrating and facilitating services for Downtown Bartow merchants, employees, visitors, community stakeholders, residents, and visitors to the City of Bartow; and

NOW, THEREFORE, in consideration of the foregoing premises and other good and valuable considerations, the receipt and sufficiency of which is hereby acknowledged, the Bartow CRA and MSB agree as follows:

Article I Preliminary Statements

1.1 Incorporation of Recitals.

The foregoing recitals are incorporated by reference as if recited in full herein. Further, the foregoing recitals serve as a joint factual stipulation upon which the parties agree is the basis of this Agreement.

1.2 Scope of Work.

In exchange for the provision of financial assistance to MSB by the CRA as described in this Master Agreement, MSB agrees to undertake the work described in Composite Exhibit “B” entitled “Assistance Application and Scope of Work Exhibit” (the “Scope of Work”), a copy of which is attached hereto and incorporated herein.

1.3 CRA Determination.

The CRA authorizes execution of this Master Agreement with MSB pursuant to the *Community Redevelopment Act of 1969*, as amended, and, more specifically, §§ 163.370, 163.380(1), 163.380(2), and 163.387 of the Florida Statutes. Further, the CRA finds that the Project as proposed furthers the interest of the City of Bartow and the Bartow CRA and is in full compliance with and authorized by the active community redevelopment plan of the City of Bartow as noted in the referenced Scope of Work Exhibit.

1.4 Project Coordination.

The CRA hereby designates the Executive Director of the Bartow CRA or his or her designee to be the Project Coordinator who will, on behalf of the CRA, coordinate with MSB and administer this Master Agreement according to the terms and conditions contained herein, inclusive of attached exhibits. It shall be the responsibility of MSB to coordinate all project-related activities and all matters under this Master Agreement with the designated Project Coordinator unless otherwise indicated in writing by the Executive Director of the Bartow CRA. Notwithstanding the foregoing or any other statements herein to the contrary, the Executive Director of the Bartow CRA is an employee of the City of Bartow and the Executive Director’s performance of any obligation of the CRA under this Agreement shall not create any separate liability for the City of Bartow. Recipient and the Bartow CRA jointly agree that the City of Bartow shall have no independent or separate liability to the Bartow CRA or MSB by virtue of the execution of this Master Agreement.

1.5 Availability of Funds.

The CRA’s obligations under this Master Agreement are contingent upon the availability of lawfully appropriated funds for the funding program, this Project in particular, and this Master Agreement in particular.

Article II
Performance; Schedules; Approvals; Reports

2.1 Scope of Work; Services to be Provided.

Pursuant to this Master Agreement, for the period of the Term of March of 2027 (twelve months), MSB shall provide the following services to the CRA:

(a) MSB shall develop, produce, coordinate, and manage all activities and services to preserve and improve Bartow's Central Business District for economic revitalization in Downtown for its restaurants, boutiques, cafes, antique shops, salons, gift and home decor stores, and commercial businesses; and

(b) MSB shall develop, manage, and update (semi-annually) a listing of all property and its owner and merchants' information in Downtown Bartow based on district area. At a minimum, the list should include the property address, owner of the property, contact information (name, email address, and phone number), property demographics (building), and lot size; and

(c) MSB shall disseminate a property list (semi-annually) with the property address, owner of the property, contact demographics (name, email address, or phone number), and the property status (vacant or occupied) to the CRA; and

(d) MSB shall develop, manage, and update (semi-annually) a list of all active businesses (restaurants, boutiques, cafes, antique shops, salons, gift and home decor stores, and commercial businesses in Downtown Bartow. At a minimum, the list should include the business address, owner of the business, contact demographics (name, email address, or phone number), type of business, and the opening or closure date of businesses in the downtown area; and

(e) MSB shall serve as a liaison between new and existing merchants and the property owners in downtown and the CRA to disseminate grant and incentives information to new and existing businesses and property owners within Downtown Bartow; and

(f) MSB shall assist property owners in the application process for preservation and restoration efforts for their buildings in Downtown Bartow; and

(g) MSB shall be a resource for all new businesses in the downtown area by providing one year of annual membership for all MSB services at no charge; and

(h) MSB shall partner with local stakeholders, Bartow Economic Development Council, Bartow Chamber of Commerce, and local city officials on any campaigns that showcase downtown as a destination; and

(i) MSB shall (semi-annually) provide the CRA Executive Board with updates on Downtown Bartow and MSB functions to develop, produce, coordinate, and manage all activities and services that preserve and improve Bartow's Central Business District for economic revitalization in Downtown; and

(j) MSB shall be responsible for the development, management, and implementation of a Downtown Banner Program designed to enhance the visual appeal, identity, and vibrancy of the Downtown Bartow district at no cost to any business merchant; and

(j) MSB shall be responsible for all aspects of the Banner Program, including conceptual design, fabrication, branding alignment, and thematic development that reflects the character, culture, and economic goals of the Community Redevelopment Area (CRA), City of Bartow, and Main Street Bartow; and

(k) MSB shall administer program logistics, including vendor coordination, inventory management, and compliance with applicable city regulations and safety standards.

2.2. Funding Assistance; Schedule

Funding assistance to MSB will be provided by the CRA in the form of a semi-annual grant payment. Payments will be made to MSB based on the schedule below and such payments shall be considered fully inclusive of all costs for the administration and facilitation of executing all services and activities authorized by this Agreement.

(a) *Payment Terms.* The CRA will provide funding to MSB based on invoices submitted semi-annually in an amount not to exceed \$60,000. Of this total funding, up to \$10,000 may be allocated specifically for the MSB Downtown Banner Program and related eligible expenses. Payments for sums due will be made within 30 days of receiving an approved invoice.

(b) *Payment Schedule:*

(1) \$30,000 is eligible for payment upon execution of the Master Services Agreement between the CRA and MSB; and

(2) \$30,000 is eligible for payment after the Semi-Annual update to the CRA board of commissioners.

(c) *Funding Particulars.* For the initial funding provided upon execution of the agreement, the amount shall not exceed \$30,000. The total funding for the services agreement shall not exceed \$60,000 annually for the period of the Term. All payments and funding under this Agreement are expressly subject to budget and appropriation by the board of commissioners of the CRA pursuant to Part III of Chapter 163, Florida Statutes, and Part I of Chapter 189, Florida Statutes.

2.3 Permitted Use and Disposition of Funds Received.

Funds received by MSB from the CRA shall only be used towards the service administration or expenses for operational costs associated with the services outlined in the scope of services to preserve and improve Bartow's Central Business District for economic revitalization in Downtown.

2.4 Annual Reporting Requirement.

MSB shall annually draft and present to the CRA, on or before October 1 of each calendar year of the Term, a written report of its activities for use by the CRA at the CRA's sole discretion. To the extent that MSB's annual report contains intellectual property or copyrighted material, MSB's submission of its written report to the CRA constitutes a license under all applicable laws, rules and regulations, for the CRA to use and reproduce some or all of MSB's written report, and all media

contained therein, for any legitimate CRA purpose, including, but not limited to, marketing of the CRA, compiling performance reports regarding the CRA, and complying with the CRA's statutory annual reporting requirement.

Article III Non-discrimination

3.1. Non-discrimination Requirements.

Notwithstanding any other provision of this Agreement, MSB for itself, its agents, and representatives, as part of the consideration for this Agreement, does covenant and agree that:

(a) ***No Exclusion from Use.*** No person shall be excluded from participation in, denied the benefits of, or otherwise be subjected to discrimination in the operation of MSB services.

(b) ***No Exclusion from Hire.*** In the management, operation, or provision of the program activities authorized and enabled by this Agreement, no person shall be excluded from participation in, denied the benefits of, or otherwise subject to discrimination on the grounds of race, color, religion, age, disability, gender, pregnancy, marital status, or national origin except that age may be taken into consideration to the extent that the age of an employee is a bona fide occupational qualification, as permitted by law.

3.2 Breach of Non-Discrimination Covenants.

If MSB violates any of the non-discrimination covenants in Section 3.1 of this Agreement, the CRA shall have the right to terminate this Agreement immediately, without regard to any grace period or opportunity to cure.

Article IV Liability, Indemnification, Sovereign Immunity, and Insurance

4.1 Independent Contractor.

MSB shall act as an independent contractor and agrees to assume all risks of providing their program activities and services herein agreed.

4.2 Indemnification.

MSB, including its employees, agents and subcontractors, shall indemnify, hold harmless and defend the CRA from and against any loss, claim, action, damage, injury, liability, cost, and expense of whatsoever kind or nature (including without limitation attorneys' fees and costs) related to any demands, suits and actions of any kind brought against the CRA or other damages or losses incurred or sustained, or claimed to have been incurred or sustained, by any person or persons arising out of or in connection with any act or omission of MSB, its contractors, subcontractors, agents, officers, employees, representatives, successors or assigns. This includes but is not limited to, matters arising out of or claimed to have been caused by or in any manner related to MSB activities or those of any approved or unapproved invitee, contractor, subcontractor, or other person approved, authorized, or permitted by MSB whether or not based on negligence. This indemnification shall survive the termination of this Agreement. The term "CRA" as used in this Section shall include all officers, board members, employees, representatives, agents, successors and assigns of the CRA, as applicable.

4.3 Sovereign Immunity; Limitation on Damages.

CRA is a sovereign Florida unit of special purpose local government. Nothing contained in this Agreement, nor in any CRA indemnification made herein if any such indemnification exists, is intended or shall be construed to waive the CRA's sovereign immunity. With respect to the matter of compensation for work performed, the parties agree that the total liability of the CRA to MSB shall not exceed the annual funding amount allocated for MSB's project by the CRA's board of commissioners. For all other matters, the parties agree that the total liability of the CRA to MSB shall not exceed the CRA's limits of liability as set forth in § 768.28(5), Florida Statutes (2023), regardless of whether any such obligations are based in tort, contract, statute, strict liability, or negligence, product liability or otherwise. Nothing herein shall be construed as consent by the CRA to be sued by third parties or as a waiver or modification of the provisions or limits of Section 768.28, Florida Statutes, or the Doctrine of Sovereign Immunity.

4.4 Control Over Means and Methods: Performance Indemnification.

MSB shall have sole and exclusive control over the means and methods of performing the Project, and, consequentially, shall be solely liable for any and all actions, causes of action, claims, suits, debts, dues, sums of money, accounts, reckonings, bonds, bills, controversies, variances, trespasses, damages, judgments, executions, demands, and restitutions, whatsoever in law or in equity, arising out of, or in any way connected to, the Project and performance of MSB's tasks and Scope of Work. In addition to any other indemnification herein, and not as a substitute or replacement, MSB agrees to indemnify the CRA, and its officers, employees, agents, and appointed officials, for any claims, costs, losses, and damages of any kind (including but not limited to fees of engineers, architects, attorneys, and other professionals and all court or other dispute resolution costs in pre-suit, trial, appellate and bankruptcy proceedings) arising out of or relating to the Project and performance of the Project work, including those claims, costs, losses, and damages of any kind (including but not limited to fees of engineers, architects, attorneys, and other professionals and all court or other dispute resolution costs in pre-suit, trial, appellate and bankruptcy proceedings) resulting from MSB's incorporation in the Project of any invention, design process, product, intellectual property, copyright, trademark, or device.

4.5 Insurance.

This provision intentionally deleted by the parties.

Article V Default and Termination

5.1 Default, Generally; Remedies.

A default shall consist of the breach of any covenant, agreement, representation, provision, or warranty contained in: (i) this Agreement (including, but not limited to, any failure to meet the reporting requirements described herein); (ii) the documents executed in connection with the Agreement and any other agreement between the CRA and MSB related to the Project; or (iii) any document provided to the CRA or the City of Bartow relating to the Project, including the Project Documents. A default shall also exist if any event occurs or information becomes known which, in the reasonable judgment of the CRA, makes untrue, incorrect or misleading in any material respect any statement or information contained in any of the documents described in clauses (i) - (iii) above or causes such document to contain an untrue, incorrect or misleading statement of material fact or

to omit to state a material fact necessary to make the statements therein, in light of the circumstances under which they were made, not misleading.

If any such default or breach occurs under this Agreement, the CRA may at any time or from time to time proceed to protect and enforce all rights available to the CRA under this Agreement by suit in equity, action at law or by any other appropriate proceeding whether for specific performance of any covenant or agreement contained in this Agreement, or damages, or other relief, or proceed to take any action authorized or permitted under applicable laws or regulations, including, but not limited to, terminating this Agreement. The CRA shall not act upon a default until it has given MSB written notice of the default and fifteen (15) business days within which to cure the default. Notwithstanding the foregoing, MSB shall immediately and automatically be in default, and the CRA shall not be required to give MSB any notice or opportunity to cure such default (and thus the CRA shall immediately be entitled to act upon such default), upon the occurrence of either of the following:

(a) The entry of a decree or order by a court having jurisdiction in the premises adjudging MSB or any guarantor ("Guarantor") of MSB's obligations hereunder or under the Project Documents, a bankrupt or insolvent, or approving as properly filed a petition seeking reorganization, arrangement, adjustment or composition of or in respect of MSB or Guarantor under the United States Bankruptcy Code or any other applicable federal or state law, or appointing a receiver, liquidator, custodian, assignee, or sequestrator (or other similar officials) of MSB or Guarantor or of any substantial part of its property, or ordering the winding up or liquidation of its affairs, and the continuance of any such decree or order unstayed and in effect for a period of 90 consecutive days; or

(b) The institution by MSB or Guarantor of proceedings to be adjudicated a bankrupt or insolvent, or the consent by it to the institution of bankruptcy or insolvency proceedings against it, or the filing by it of a petition or answer or consent seeking reorganization or relief under the United States Bankruptcy Code or any other similar applicable federal or state law, or the consent by it to the filing of any such petition or to the appointment of a receiver, liquidator, custodian, assignee, trustee or sequestrator (or other similar officials) of MSB or Guarantor or of any substantial part of its property, or the making by it of an assignment for the benefit of creditors, or the admission by it in writing of its inability to pay its debts generally as they become due.

5.2 Termination.

(a) *For Cause.* An uncured default shall constitute cause for termination. Either party may terminate this Agreement for cause by giving the other party a notice of termination. If a notice of termination is issued for an uncured default, this Agreement shall terminate on the 31st day after receipt, *provided however* that if MSB defaults for the reasons specified in paragraphs 5.1(a) or 5.1(b), this Agreement shall terminate immediately.

(b) *For Convenience.* Either party may terminate this Agreement for its convenience, without cause, by giving the other party 180 days' notice of termination. After receipt of such notice, this Agreement shall terminate on the 181st day.

(c) *By MSB for CRA's Failure to Appropriate Funds.* In the event that the CRA fails to appropriate monies in a sufficient amount to pay the grant sums for MSB's services and scope of work articulated herein before October 30 of each calendar year of the Term, MSB may terminate this Agreement upon written notice to the CRA. After receipt of such notice, this Agreement shall terminate immediately.

(d) *Disposition of Fund Monies.* In the event of termination for any reason, monies provided to MSB by the CRA but not expended in accordance with this Agreement shall be returned to the CRA within 30 days of demand and no other installments shall be paid.

Article VI General Provisions

6.1 Purpose.

MSB represents and agrees that its undertakings pursuant to this Agreement are for the purpose of developing unique services pursuant to this Agreement, and not for speculation. MSB further recognizes, in view of the importance of the services provided to the general health and welfare of the City of Bartow, the Bartow CRA, the community redevelopment area, and that the qualifications and identity of the principal officers of MSB are of particular concern to the CRA.

6.2 Non-liability of City or CRA Officials.

No officer, employee, agent, elected official or appointed official of the City of Bartow or the Bartow CRA shall be personally liable to MSB or to any Person with whom MSB shall have entered into any contract, or to any other Person, in the event of any default or breach by the City, or for any amount which may become due to MSB or any other Person under the terms of this Agreement.

6.3 Force Majeure.

No party to this Agreement shall be deemed in default hereunder where such a default is based on a delay in performance as a result of war, insurrection, strikes, lockouts, riots, floods, earthquakes, fires, casualty, acts of God, acts of public enemy, epidemic, quarantine restrictions, freight embargo, shortage of labor or materials, interruption of utilities service, lack of transportation, severe weather and other acts or failures beyond the control or without the control of any party; provided, however, that the extension of time granted for any delay caused by any of the foregoing shall not exceed the actual period of such delay, and in no event shall any of the foregoing excuse any financial liability of a party.

6.5 Notices.

All notices to be given hereunder shall be in writing and personally delivered or sent by registered or certified mail, return receipt requested, or delivered by an air courier service utilizing return receipts to the parties at the following addresses (or to such other or further addresses as the parties may designate by like notice similarly sent) and such notices shall be deemed given and received for all purposes under this Agreement three (3) business days after the date same are deposited in the United States mail if sent by registered or certified mail, or the date actually received if sent by personal delivery or air courier service, except that notice of a change in address shall be effective only upon receipt.

(a) the CRA:

Executive Director
Bartow Community Redevelopment Agency
450 North Wilson Avenue
Bartow, Florida 33830

(b) MSB:

At the address specified above.

6.6 Time.

Time is of the essence in the performance by any party of its obligations hereunder.

6.7 Entire Agreement; Disclaimer of Warranties.

This Agreement constitutes the entire understanding and agreement between the parties and supersedes all prior negotiations and agreements between them with respect to all or any of the subjects and matters contained herein. No representations or warranties by either party shall be binding unless expressed herein or in a duly executed amendment hereof.

6.8 Amendment.

This Agreement may be amended by the parties hereto only upon the execution of a written notification signed by the parties. Notwithstanding the foregoing, the Executive Director of the CRA is authorized to approve, in his or her sole discretion, any "technical" changes to this Agreement. Such "technical" changes include without limitation non-material modifications to legal descriptions and surveys, ingress and egress, easements and rights of way, and design standards, as long as such modifications do not involve any increased financial obligation or liability to the CRA.

6.9 Waivers.

Except as otherwise provided herein, all waivers, amendments or modifications of this Agreement must be in writing and signed by all parties. Any failures or delays by any party in insisting upon strict performance of the provisions hereof or asserting any of its rights and remedies as to any default shall not constitute a waiver of any other default or of any such rights or remedies. Except with respect to rights and remedies expressly declared to be exclusive in this Agreement, the rights and remedies of the parties hereto are cumulative, and the exercise by any party of one or more of such rights or remedies shall not preclude the exercise by it, at the same or different times, of any other rights or remedies for the same default or any other default by any other party.

6.10 Binding Effect.

By the execution hereof, the parties certify as follows:

(a) MSB certifies that:

(1) the execution and delivery hereof has been approved by all parties whose approval is required for the Scope of Work and the Project to be implemented and fulfilled;

(2) this Master Agreement does not violate any of the terms or conditions of any agreement that may be binding upon MSB and enforceable against it in accordance with its terms;

(3) the person or persons executing this Master Agreement are duly authorized and fully empowered to execute the same for and on behalf of MSB;

(4) MSB is duly authorized to transact business in the State of Florida under the laws of the State of Florida and, to the extent applicable, has received or will obtain all necessary permits and authorizations required by appropriate governmental agencies as a condition to doing business in the State of Florida, Polk County, and the City of Bartow; and

(5) MSB is in compliance with all federal, state and local laws applicable to the performance of the Scope of Work in the City of Bartow, Florida.

(b) The CRA certifies that the execution and delivery hereof is binding upon the CRA to the extent provided herein and enforceable against it in accordance with its terms.

6.11 Severability.

The invalidity, illegality or unenforceability of any one or more of the provisions of this Agreement shall not affect any other provisions of this Agreement, but this Agreement will be construed as if such invalid, illegal or unenforceable provision had never been contained herein.

6.12 Compliance with State and Other Laws.

(a) In the performance of this Agreement, MSB must comply with any and all applicable federal, state and local laws, rules and regulations, as the same exist and may be amended from time to time. Such laws, rules and regulations include, but are not limited to, Chapter 119, Florida Statutes (the Public Records Act) and Section 286.011, Florida Statutes, (the Florida Sunshine Law). If any of the obligations of this Agreement are to be performed by a contractor or subcontractor, the provisions of this Section shall be incorporated into and become a part of the contract or subcontract.

(b) *Public Records.* MSB agrees to:

(1) Keep and maintain public records required by the CRA to perform the services specified herein.

(2) Upon request from the CRA's custodian of public records, provide the CRA with a copy of the requested records or allow the records to be inspected or copies within a reasonable time at a cost that does not exceed the cost provided in this chapter or as otherwise provided by law.

(3) Ensure that public records that are exempt or confidential and exempt from public records disclosure requirements are not disclosed except as authorized by law for the duration of the Agreement term and following completion of the Agreement if MSB does not transfer the records to the CRA.

(4) Upon completion of the Agreement, transfer, at no cost, to the CRA all public records in possession of MSB or keep and maintain public records required by the CRA to perform the service. If MSB transfers all public records to the CRA upon completion of the Agreement, MSB shall destroy any duplicate public records that are exempt or confidential and exempt from public records disclosure requirements. If MSB keeps and maintains public records upon completion of the Agreement, MSB shall meet all applicable requirements for retaining public records. All records stored electronically must be provided to the CRA upon request from the CRA's custodian of public records, in a format that is compatible with the CRA's information technology systems.

IF MSB HAS QUESTIONS REGARDING THE APPLICATION OF CHAPTER 119, FLORIDA STATUTES, TO MSB'S DUTY TO PROVIDE PUBLIC RECORDS RELATING TO THIS AGREEMENT, CONTACT THE CUSTODIAN OF PUBLIC RECORDS AT 863-534-0121, CHSMITH@CITYOFBARTOW.NET, 450 N WILSON AVE, BARTOW, FL 33830.

If MSB does not comply with a public records request, the CRA shall enforce this Agreement, which may include immediate termination.

(c) *Scrutinized Companies.* Section 287.135 of the Florida Statutes states that a company is ineligible to, and may not, bid on, submit a proposal for, or enter into or renew a contract with the CRA for goods or services in any amount if at the time of bidding on, submitting a proposal for, or entering into or renewing a contract if the company is on the Scrutinized Companies that Boycott Israel List, created pursuant to Section 215.4725 of the Florida Statutes or is engaged in a boycott of Israel; or for One Million Dollars (\$1,000,000.00) or more of value if, at the time of bidding on submitting a proposal for, or entering into or renewing a contract, the company is on the Scrutinized Companies with Activities in Sudan List, the Scrutinized Companies with Activities in the Iran Petroleum Energy Sector List, created pursuant to Section 215.473 of the Florida Statutes, or is engaged in business operations in Cuba or Syria. By executing this Agreement, MSB certifies that it does not and did not at any time since the filing of its Assistance Application participate in a boycott of Israel; that it is not on the Scrutinized Companies that Boycott Israel List, Scrutinized Companies with Activities in Sudan List, or the Scrutinized Companies with Activities in the Iran Petroleum Energy Sector List; and that it does not engage in business operations in Cuba or Syria. MSB understands that a false certification may subject it to civil penalties, attorneys' fees and costs pursuant to Section 287.135 of the Florida Statutes and that the CRA may terminate this Agreement at the CRA's option if MSB is found to have submitted a false certification.

(d) *No Consideration of Social, Political and Ideological Interests.* MSB acknowledges receipt of notice from the CRA of the provisions of Section 287.05701 of the Florida Statutes which prohibits local governments from giving preference to a prospective vendor based on the prospective vendor's social, political or ideological interests or requesting documentation from, or considering, a prospective vendor's social, political, or ideological interests when determining if the prospective vendor is responsible. MSB affirms and agrees that the CRA did not request any documentation about, or give any consideration to, MSB's social, political, or ideological interests in the award of financial assistance provided pursuant to this Agreement.

(e) *Contracting with Foreign Entities.* This paragraph applies if MSB is an entity subject to Section 287.138 of the Florida Statutes. By executing this Agreement, MSB certifies that it is not owned by the government of the People's Republic of China, the Russian Federation, the Islamic Republic of Iran, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, the Republic of Cuba, the Venezuelan regime of Nicolás Maduro, or the Syrian Arab Republic (collectively "Foreign Countries of Concern"), nor is it owned by any agency of or any other entity of significant control of any such government. Further, MSB certifies that no government of a Foreign Country of Concern has a "controlling interest" in MSB as the term is defined in Section 287.138(1)(a) of the Florida Statutes, nor is MSB organized under the laws of a Foreign Country of Concern, nor does MSB have its principal place of business located in a Foreign Country of Concern. If this Agreement permits MSB to access the personal identifying information of any individual, MSB agrees to notify the CRA in advance of any contemplated transaction that would cause MSB to be disqualified from such access

under Section 287.138 of the Florida Statutes. MSB agrees to furnish the CRA with an affidavit signed by an officer or representative of MSB under penalty of perjury at any time and upon request that the statements in this Section are true and correct.

6.13 Public Entity Crimes Notice.

In conformity with the requirements of Section 287.133, Florida Statutes, the Parties agree as follows:

The parties are aware and understand that a person or affiliate who has been placed on the State of Florida Convicted Vendor List, following a conviction for a public entity crime, may not submit a bid on a contract to provide any goods or services to a public entity; may not submit a bid on a contract with a public entity for the construction or repair of a public building or public work; may not submit bids on leases of real property to a public entity; may not be awarded or perform work as a contractor, supplier, subcontractor, or consultant under a contract with any public entity; and may not transact business with any public entity, in excess of \$35,000.00, for a period of thirty-six (36) months from the date of being placed on the Convicted Vendor List.

6.14 Venue; Applicable Law.

This Agreement is deemed executed by the parties at the CRA's office in Bartow, Polk County, Florida. All rights, obligations and remedies of the parties specified under this Agreement shall be interpreted and governed in all respects by the laws of the State of Florida. Any legal action arising out of or connected with this Agreement must be instituted in the Florida state court system in and for Polk County, Florida, which, as of the date of this Agreement, consists solely of the Circuit Court of the Tenth Judicial Circuit, in and for Polk County, Florida, and the County Court in and for Polk County, Florida. The parties agree that no litigation between them shall be instituted in a federal venue, regardless of the cause of action, citizenship of the parties or amount in controversy. The laws of the State of Florida shall govern the interpretation and enforcement of this Agreement.

6.15 Incorporation by Reference.

All exhibits and other attachments to this Agreement that are referenced in this Agreement are, by this reference, made a part hereof and are incorporated herein.

6.16 Order of Precedence.

In the event of any conflict between or among the provisions of this Agreement and those of any exhibit attached hereto or of any amendment, the priority, in decreasing order of precedence shall be: 1) any fully executed amendment; 2) provisions in this Agreement; and 3) exhibits to this Agreement.

6.17 Counterparts.

This Agreement may be executed in several counterparts, each of which shall be deemed an original, and all of such counterparts together shall constitute one and the same instrument.

6.18 Non-Merger

None of the terms, covenants, agreements or conditions set forth in this Agreement shall be deemed to be merged with any deed conveying title to the Project parcel(s).

6.19 Exemption of CRA.

Neither this Agreement nor the obligations imposed upon the CRA hereunder shall be or constitute an indebtedness of the CRA or of the City of Bartow within the meaning of any constitutional, statutory or charter provisions requiring the City of Bartow to levy ad valorem taxes. Payment or disbursement by the CRA of any loan or grant amount hereunder is subject to the availability of lawfully appropriated funds. If funds are not available pursuant to a lawful appropriation thereof by the Board of Commissioners of the CRA, this Agreement shall be void and the CRA shall have no further obligations hereunder.

6.20 Parties to Agreement; Successors and Assigns.

This Agreement is solely between the CRA and MSB. The execution and delivery hereof shall not be deemed to confer any rights or privileges on any person not a party hereto. This Agreement shall be binding upon MSB and MSB's successors and assigns, and shall inure to the benefit of the CRA and its successors and assigns. However, MSB shall not assign, transfer or encumber its rights or obligations hereunder or under any document executed in connection herewith, without the prior written consent of the CRA, which consent may be withheld in the sole discretion of the CRA.

6.21 Further Assurances.

MSB will, on request of the CRA,

(a) promptly correct any defect, error or omission herein or in any document executed in connection herewith, including the Project Documents; and

(b) execute, acknowledge, deliver, procure, record or file such further instruments and do such further acts deemed necessary, desirable or proper by the CRA to carry out the purposes of the Scope of Work and to identify any property intended to be covered thereby, including any renewals, additions, substitutions replacements, or appurtenances to the Subject Property; and

(c) execute, acknowledge, deliver, procure, file or record any documents or instruments deemed necessary, desirable or proper by the CRA to protect its liens or security interest against the rights or interests of third persons, if any exist; and

(d) provide such certificates, documents, reports, information, affidavits and other instruments and do such further acts deemed necessary, desirable or proper by the CRA to carry out the purposes of the Scope of Work.

6.22 Further Authorizations.

The parties acknowledge and agree that the Chair of the Board of Commissioners of the CRA and the CRA's Executive Director, or their respective designees, are hereby authorized to execute any and all other contracts and documents and otherwise take all necessary action in connection with this Agreement.

6.23 Attorneys Fees.

Each party shall be responsible for its own attorneys' fees and costs in connection with any

legal action related to this Agreement.

ARTICLE VII. NOTICE

Any notice required or permitted to be given by the provisions of this Agreement shall be conclusively deemed to have been received by a party hereto on the date it is hand-delivered to such party at the address indicated below (or at such other address as such party shall specify to the other party in writing), or if sent by registered or certified mail (postage prepaid), on the 5th business day after the day on which such notice is mailed and properly addressed.

- 1) If to RECIPIENT addressed to: Linda Holcomb, Recipient
180 S. Central Ave
Bartow, Florida 33830

- 2) If to CRA, addressed to: Gordon Greene, Board Chairman, CRA
450 Wilson Ave
Bartow, FL 33830

With copies to:
Drew Crawford, CRA Attorney
Boswell & Dunlop
Post Office Drawer 30,
Bartow FL 33831

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, the parties hereto have set their hands and seals.

Countersigned: Community Redevelopment Agency Board

Board Chairman

Attest:

C. Howard Smith, Director
Community Redevelopment Agency

Recipient- Main Street Bartow

By: _____
Linda Holcomb, Executive Director

Attest:

Jackie Poole, City Clerk
City of Bartow

GENERAL INFORMATION

Request: Presentation and Discussion of Florida Housing Coalition, Tax Credits Initiatives

BACKGROUND

The Florida Housing Coalition (FHC) plays a critical role in advancing affordable housing initiatives across the State of Florida through training, technical assistance, and education. One of the primary programs supported by FHC is the Low-Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC) program, a federal initiative established under Section 42 of the Internal Revenue Code. The LIHTC program is administered at the state level by the Florida Housing Finance Corporation (FHFC), which oversees the allocation of tax credits to qualified affordable housing developments.

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

The LIHTC program is designed to incentivize private sector investment in affordable rental housing by offering a dollar-for-dollar reduction in federal tax liability. In exchange, developers agree to reserve a portion of units for low-income households.

Key program components include:

Administration: FHFC allocates tax credits based on the state's Qualified Allocation Plan (QAP), which establishes funding priorities and criteria.

Types of Credits:

- 9% Credits – Typically used for new construction projects
- 4% Credits – Typically used for acquisition and rehabilitation of existing properties

Affordability Requirements: Developments must reserve units for households earning at or below 60% of Area Median Income (AMI), with many projects targeting lower income thresholds.

Funding Layering: LIHTC developments are often combined with additional funding sources such as State Apartment Incentive Loan (SAIL), HOME Investment Partnerships Program (HOME), and State Housing Initiatives Partnership (SHIP).

STAFF ANALYSIS

The LIHTC program remains one of the most effective tools for producing and preserving affordable rental housing. Through its partnership with FHFC and local stakeholders, FHC strengthens the ability of communities to successfully compete for and implement LIHTC-funded developments with an example being the Bartow Commons Project.

For local governments, engagement with FHC provides:

- Increased competitiveness in LIHTC applications
- Improved project structuring and compliance
- Enhanced access to training and technical expertise
- Greater alignment with state and federal housing policies

GENERAL INFORMATION

Request: Presentation on the Community Redevelopment Agency's Webpage

STAFF ANALYSIS

The purpose of this item is to provide an update on the completion of the Community Redevelopment Agency's, CRA, webpage, and its alignment with the objectives outlined in the 2025 Branding Request for Proposal, RFP.

BACKGROUND

Pursuant to the Branding RFP, the following components of the CRA webpage have been successfully developed and implemented for:

- **Website Design and Branding**

- Creation of a user-friendly, visually cohesive webpage consistent with the CRA and City branding standards
- Integration of custom fonts, imagery, and layout enhancements to improve user experience

Content Development

- Development of clear, concise, and engaging content that communicates the CRA's mission, vision, and strategic priorities.
- Dedicated sections for:
 - About the CRA
 - Programs and Incentives
 - Redevelopment Projects
 - News and Announcements
 - Public Meetings and Calendar

Community Engagement Features

- Interactive elements designed to connect users with CRA initiatives, including event updates and program participation opportunities
- Accessibility features to ensure usability for a broad range of users

Document and Resource Library

- Centralized access to key documents including plans, reports, applications, and program policies.
- Downloadable forms and guidelines for businesses and residents

Integration and Functionality

- Seamless integration with the City's main website platform
- Mobile-responsive design for accessibility across devices
- Optimization for search engines (SEO) to improve visibility

IMPACT AND BENEFITS

The completion of the CRA webpage advances several key objectives:

- **Enhanced Transparency:**
Provides the public and CRA Board with easy access to important information, reports, and updates
- **Improved Communication:**
Establishes a consistent and centralized platform for sharing CRA news, programs, and opportunities
- **Increased Community Engagement:**
Encourages participation from residents, businesses, and stakeholders through accessible and interactive content
- **Economic Development Support:**
Offers clear pathways for businesses and developers to access incentives, resources, and redevelopment information.

AVAILABILITY OF FUNDS

The CRA's webpage development was funded through its FY 2024–2025 budget under the Communications/Marketing line item, as approved through the Communications RFP process. All services were completed within the allocated budget.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommend that the CRA Board acknowledge the completion of the CRA webpage as outlined in the 2025 Branding RFP and support ongoing updates and maintenance to ensure the webpage remains current, relevant, and responsive to community needs.

ATTACHMENT

None

GENERAL INFORMATION

Request: Review and Take Action for the CRA Business Retention Tool Kit Phase Two, Business Growth & Development Services (BGDS)

STAFF ANALYSIS

The purpose of this item is to review and take action on the approval of Phase Two of the Community Redevelopment Agency's, CRA, Business Retention Tool Kit – the Business Growth & Development Services (BGDS) initiative. This phase is designed to enhance small business retention by providing access to capital, technical assistance, and strategic resources that support business expansion and long-term sustainability within the CRA District.

BACKGROUND

The CRA recognizes that small businesses are critical to the economic vitality, redevelopment, and long-term sustainability of the district. Providing targeted support through structured programs and services is a key component of the CRA's Strategic Work Plan. The BGDS initiative builds upon these efforts by strengthening business capacity, improving access to financial resources, and fostering opportunities for growth, competitiveness, and reinvestment within the local economy

Business Growth & Development Services (BGDS)

The Business Growth & Development Services (BGDS) initiative is a comprehensive programming effort designed to support businesses within the CRA District by providing access to capital, technical assistance, and strategic business resources. This initiative is intended to strengthen business operations, expand economic opportunities, and promote long-term sustainability and growth.

Program components include:

- Access to Capital
 - Provides businesses with access to financial resources to support operations, expansion, and investment, including:
 - SBA 7(a) Loans
 - 504 Loans
 - Microloans
 - Lender Match Programs
 - Developer Financing Opportunities

- Technical Assistance and Capacity Building
 - Offers one-on-one guidance and structured support to enhance business performance and competitiveness, including:
 - Business planning and startup assistance
 - Financial literacy and community education programs
 - Operational and technology adoption support

- Employment cohort initiatives to strengthen workforce retention and management practices
- Business Management Support
 - Delivers strategic guidance in key operational areas, including marketing, legal considerations, and overall business operations to support retention and sustainable growth.
- Business Development Services
 - Facilitates opportunities for business expansion and market growth through:
 - Networking with investors and financial institutions
 - Access to new business opportunities and service markets
 - Development of public-private partnerships
- Access to New Markets Tax Credit (NMTC) Program
 - Connects eligible projects to financing tools that support high-impact economic development activities, including:
 - Funding support for construction and redevelopment projects
 - Investment in community-serving initiatives such as youth programs and healthcare services
 - Leveraging millions in capital deployment for catalytic or transformative projects

Phase Two contracted services are designed to support businesses at all stages of development by providing tailored advisory services, access to financial resources, and strategic partnerships. This initiative is expected to enhance business performance, increase access to capital, and generate long-term economic impact within the CRA District.

AVAILABILITY OF FUNDS

Funds are available in the CRA's Amended Fiscal Year 2025-2026 adopted budget under the Business Retention Tool Kit line item 559201-881-028

RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommend approval of the Business Growth & Development Services (BGDS) initiative for the engagement of a qualified contracted service provider as outlined in the amended adopted FY 26/25 Budget.

ATTACHEMNET

None

OLD BUSINESS

GENERAL INFORMATION

Request: Review and Take Action to approve the funding allocation for the development of Cigar Factory

STAFF ANALYSIS

The purpose of this item is to take action to authorize the transfer of funds to the City of Bartow in an amount not to exceed \$2,000,000, which aligns with the CRA's FY 2025/2026 amended budget adopted at the February 2026 Board Meeting.

This funding will be used to provide a redevelopment incentive for the Cigar Factory as a redevelopment project. The project can include building construction and/or land development activities necessary to eliminate Blight within the Community Redevelopment area. This initiative is a key component of the CRA's broader redevelopment strategy and supports the advancement of the East End Vision.

BACKGROUND

The Cigar Factory redevelopment project has been identified as a priority catalytic initiative within the CRA district due to its potential to eliminate Blight and stimulate long-term economic investment in East Midtown.

During FY 2025/2026 budget adoption, the CRA Board allocated funding through the budget adoption process to support this strategic redevelopment initiative as an incentive-based tool to assist in closing financial gaps for development of the site. The City of Bartow has been identified as the implementing partner to administer redevelopment incentives and coordinate project execution activities related to the development of Cigar Factory building or the site.

PROJECT COMPONENTS

Approval of this transfer will allow the City of Bartow to deploy CRA funds in support of:

- Acquisition, redevelopment, or rehabilitation of the Cigar Factory property
- Land assembly or site preparation activities necessary for redevelopment
- Structural improvements and infrastructure enhancements supporting reuse
- Elimination of blight conditions consistent with CRA statutory objectives
- Facilitation of private-sector investment and development readiness

The not-to-exceed amount of \$2,000,000 allocation of funding as a fiscal control while providing flexibility for phased redevelopment or negotiated incentive (s) agreements aligned with project needs.

This action supports the CRA's mission to eliminate blight, promote economic revitalization, and encourage reinvestment in underutilized or deteriorated properties within the district.

AVAILABILITY OF FUNDS

Funding for this agreement is allocated within the CRA's Amended Fiscal Year 2025-2026 budget under the CRA Construction Project (Cigar Factory) Line item 559201-881-052.

LEGAL CONSIDERATION

All funding transfers and incentive expenditures shall comply with Florida Statutes governing Community Redevelopment Agencies for Chapter 163.187, applicable interlocal agreements between the CRA and the City of Bartow and all applicable procurement policies for public purpose requirements.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommend approval of the administrative transfer of CRA funds to the City of Bartow in an amount not to exceed \$2,000,000 to support Cigar Factory redevelopment project, including building and/or land development to eliminate Blight and advance redevelopment objectives consistent with the adopted FY 2025/2026 amended budget.

ATTACHMENT

None