

2023 - 2024

CITY OF HIGH SPRINGS CRA ANNUAL REPORT





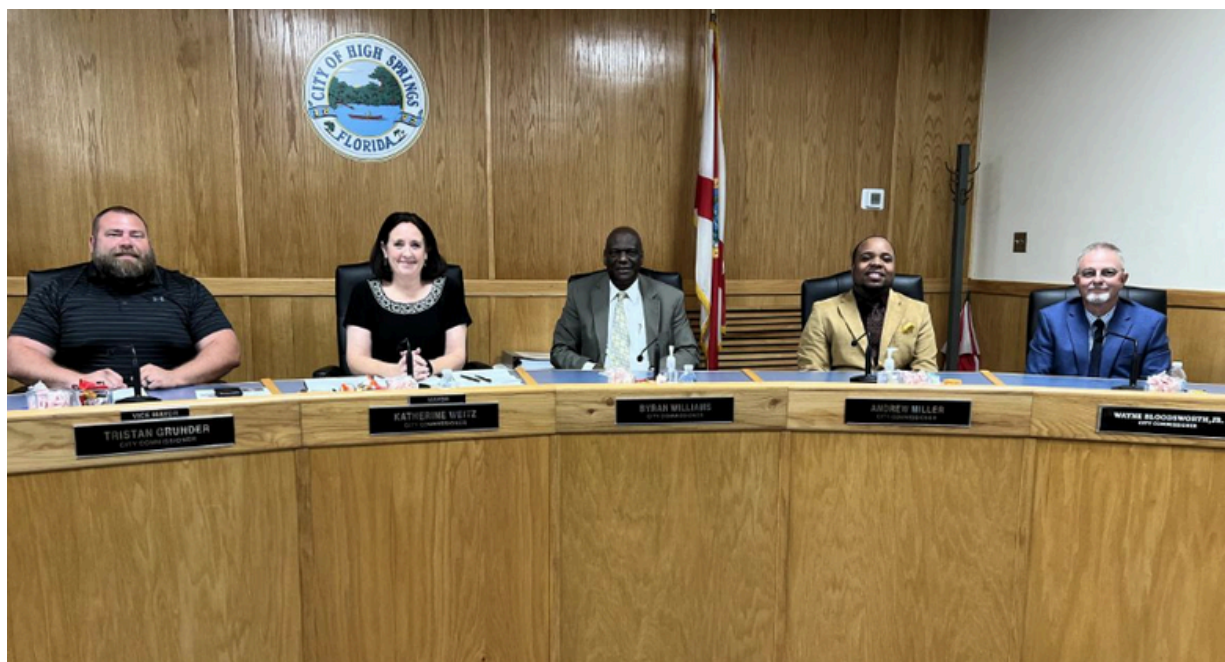
INTRODUCTION

A Community Redevelopment Agency (CRA) is a dependent special district in which any future increases in property values within the district are set aside to support redevelopment activities to eliminate conditions of slum and blight, improve the economic vitality of the district, and enhance the tax base through redevelopment activities and the establishment of public/private partnerships within the district. Community Redevelopment Agencies are authorized by Florida Statute (Chapter 163, Part III) and created at the local level by cities and counties for the purpose of carrying out redevelopment activities that include revitalizing dilapidated buildings and neighborhoods, improving public infrastructure and amenities, creating jobs, and enhancing the quality of life for residents.

The High Springs Community Redevelopment District was created by the City of High Springs in December 1986 to implement the community redevelopment activities outlined in Chapter 163, Florida Statutes. The High Springs CRA is set remain in effect through Fiscal Year 2030-2031. The CRA District currently encompasses approximately 109 acres comprised of the downtown business district and surrounding area. The five City Chamber Members serve as the CRA Board and help make decisions concerning the City of High Springs CRA district.

The Community Redevelopment Agency Plan serves as the primary guide for all CRA activities and projects. Community Redevelopment Districts must maintain an independent trust fund and expend those funds only in their designated districts. Community Redevelopment Agencies administer the projects within the CRA District. Community Redevelopment Boards direct the activities of the CRA. The High Springs CRA is funded through tax increment financing (TIF) contributions by Alachua County and the City of High Springs.

FY 2024 (October 1, 2023 - September 30, 2024) was a successful and productive year for the High Springs Community Redevelopment Agency (CRA). This report celebrates CRA achievements and an optimistic look to future FYs to come in the CRA by providing a brief highlight of the programs and activities supported by the CRA. The report also provides a brief financial overview of the CRA Trust Fund.



CRA BOARD (FROM RIGHT TO LEFT)

Vice Chair Wayne Bloodsworth, JR

Chair Andrew Miller

Board Member Byran Williams

Mayor/Board Member Katherine Weitz

Vice Mayor/Board Member Tristan Grunder

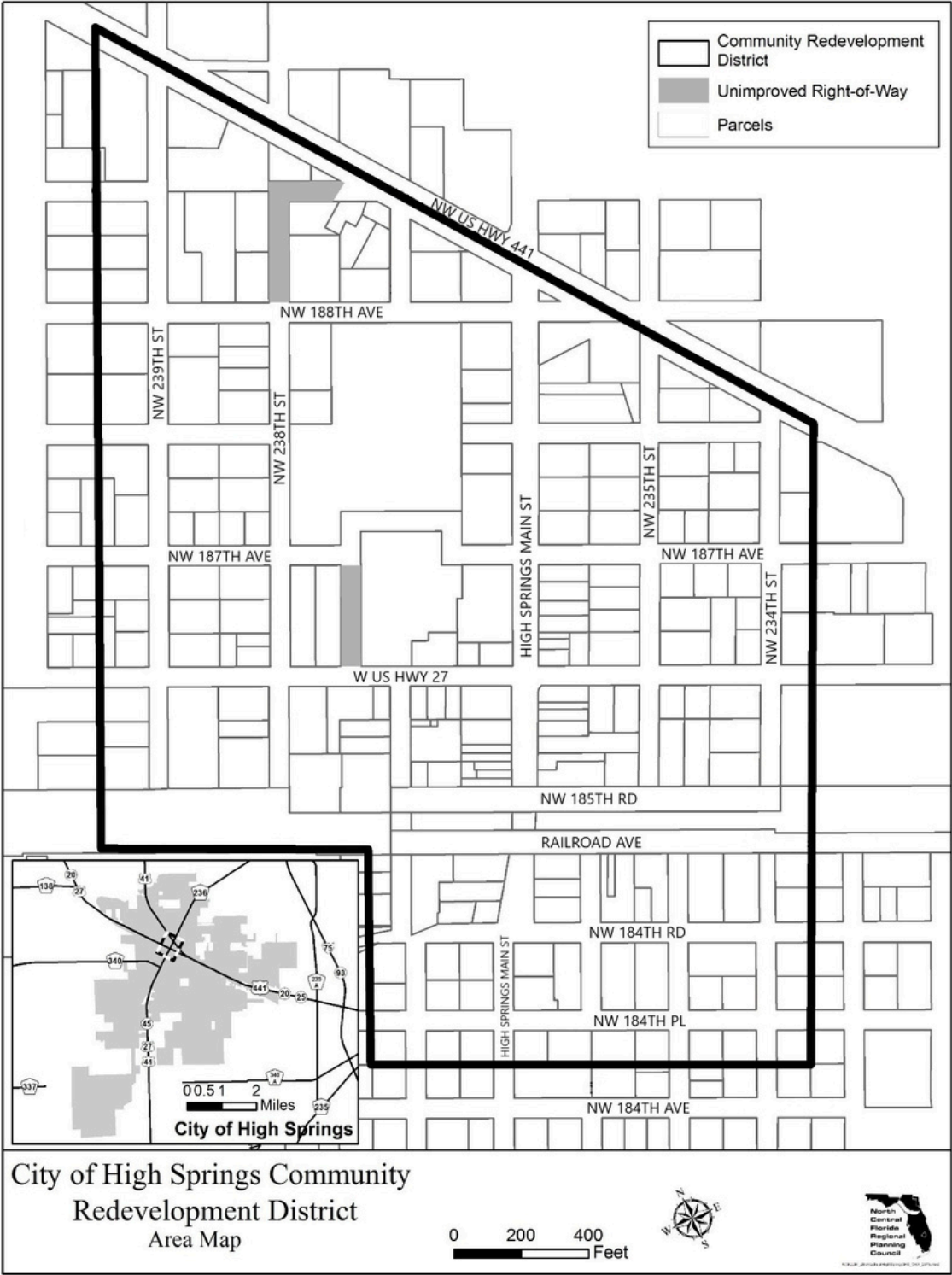
CRA STAFF

City Manager/Executive Director: Jeremy Marshall

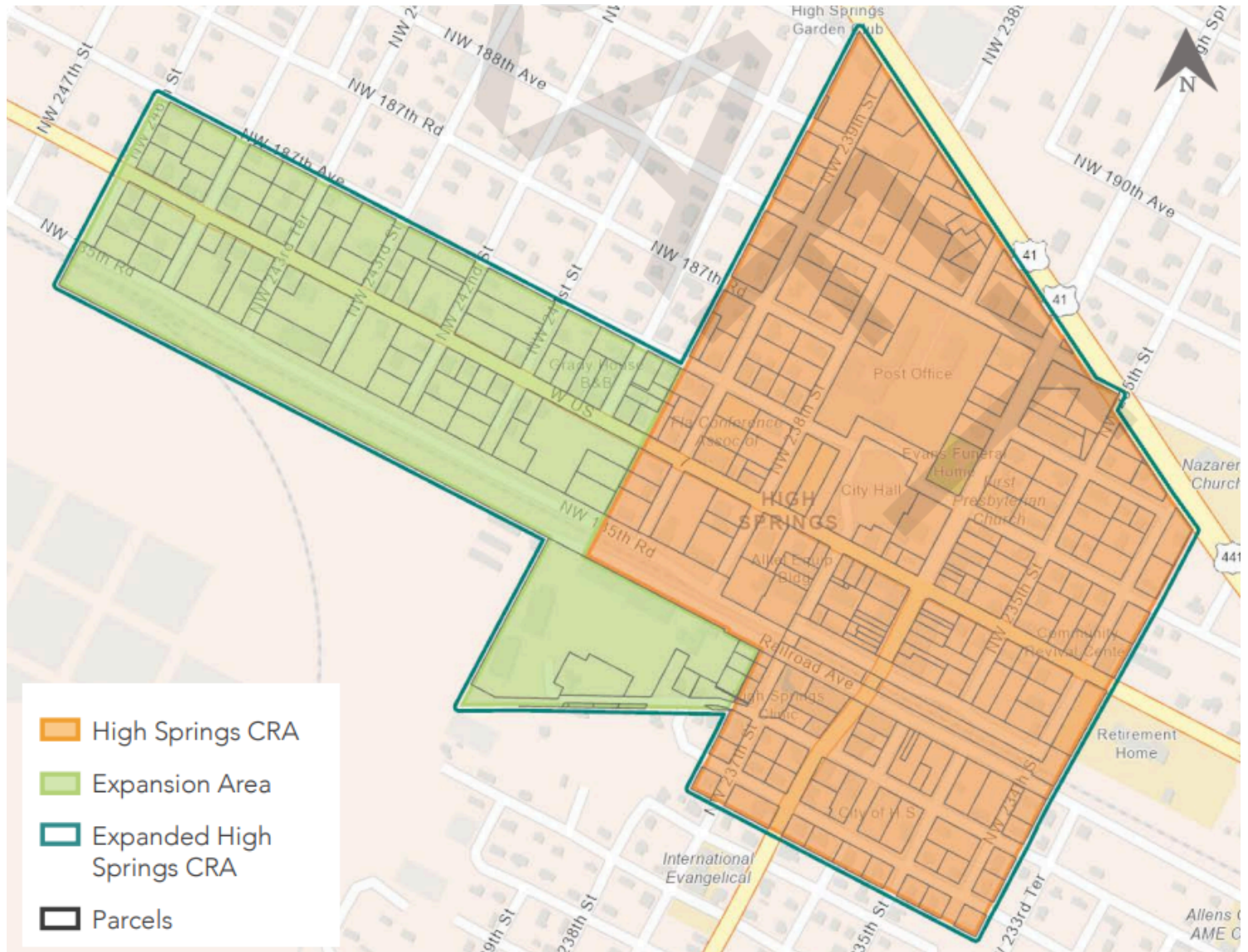
CRA Manager: Amy Bohannon, FRA-RP



CURRENT CRA DISTRICT



PROPOSED EXPANSION AREA



The Finding of Necessity was completed August 2022.

The Finding of Necessity was formally adopted by the CRA Board on August 17, 2023.

The CRA Strategic Plan was updated October 2023 to include the finding of necessity.

The Updated strategic plan was approved by the CRA board on Jan 25, 2024.

We now need hopeful approval from the county for the expansion area to be granted and included in the CRA Boundary.

There have been many changes in the CRA department over the past 5 years. The current CRA Manager has worked in the department for almost 2 years. She has received the training and certification to best serve the district in carrying out the goals and redevelopment plan of the High Springs Community Redevelopment Agency.

PROJECTS AND ACCOMPLISHMENT IN THE DISTRICT

We are excited to share our recent redevelopment wins in the CRA District and the path to future improvements.

COMMERCIAL FACADE GRANT

The Commercial Facade Grant is proving to be a success in the CRA District. This program aims to encourage the rehabilitation and preservation of commercial buildings through grant funding up to \$10,000 in reimbursable funds as a 50/50 match.

In FY 2023 the Facade grant was rewritten and updated to increase the potential total per grant from \$5000 to \$10000 to keep up with rising costs. Supporting grant documents were created and rolled out in late October 2023.

We are happy to report that we are seeing an increase in participation in the Commercial Facade Grant Program. And an escalation in revitalization efforts in the business district by the private sector.

The Commercial Facade Grant Program allows for businesses in the district to invest in themselves and help not only increase their curb appeal but raise their property value as well. All while preserving the building for many years to come.



FACADE IMPROVEMENT GRANT MATCHING PROGRAM

HIGH SPRINGS
COMMUNITY REDEVELOPMENT AGENCY

How it Works

1. Go online and review the full program policy at www.highsprings.gov/cra
2. Meet with staff to discuss requirements and eligibility
3. Complete project design and application requirements
4. CRA Board reviews application
5. Upon approval, construction begins
6. Completed project is reviewed and reimbursement is sent upon approval of work.

The Facade Improvement Program aims to revitalize the historic character and attractiveness of businesses in the High Springs CRA district. To encourage and advance revitalization efforts, this program provides a 50/50 reimbursement for eligible improvements up to \$10,000.

The overall appearance of buildings weighs heavily into the success and prosperity of the district. A well maintained downtown attracts visitors, promotes retail activity, and elevates community pride.

The Facade Improvement Grant program was designed to assist with rehabilitation and maintenance needs for buildings within the High Springs CRA footprint.

Contact Amy Bohannon for more information at 386-454-6225 or CRA@HIGHSPRINGS.GOV

HERE ARE OUR GRANT RECIPIENTS FOR FY 2024.

GFWC HIGH SPRINGS NEW CENTURY WOMEN'S CLUB

Built in 1900 and lovingly maintained and cared for by an amazing organization that just celebrated their 125th Anniversary.

The Women's Club Applied for the Commercial Facade Grant on January 17, 2024

Application was review and accepted by the CRA Board at the March 28, 2024 CRA Meeting.

Windows were restored, water barrier adding and siding replaced and repaired, and building repainted. Building was repainted. Work was completed on August 13, 2024.

Commercial Grant match of \$10000 was awarded on August 13, 2024.

Total Cost for Job: \$20,300

CRA Contribution: \$10,000

Value Added by Private Sector unmeasurable. The GFWC High Springs Women's Club serve as pillars in the community. Their motto "Not for ourselves alone, but for others" really says it all about this wonderful organization. Now their building has been expertly restored and their efforts in the community will hopefully carry on for another 100 + Years.

BEFORE



AFTER



MARRY ME MINIMONIES

Marry Me Minimomies is a applied for Commercial Facade Grant on March 28, 2024.

Application Review and Accepted by the CRA Board May 9, 2024.

Work consisted of prep of building for full exterior paint, paint exterior white and trim, front door, and awning black. The building was cleaned, pressure washed, cracks sealed, and painted.

Work was completed on June 10, 2024.

Grant money reimbursed on June 25, 2024.

Total Cost of the Job: \$990.48

CRA Contribution Match: \$495.24

This project shows how a little paint can transform and preserve a building for many years to come.

BEFORE



AFTER



SPRING BUILDING, LLC

Applied for Commercial Facade Grant on January 29, 2024.
Application Review and Accepted by the CRA Board March 28, 2024.

Replace old and broken windows, new glass for front door, and
replace awnings.

Project Quote: \$22,268.46.

Full Grant Request: \$10,000

Grant will be awarded upon completion in FY 2025

BEFORE



IN PROGRESS



TWO FINGER PROPERTIES, LLC (DECADES ON MAIN & GOOD NEWS ARTS)

**Applied for Commercial Facade Grant on March 26, 2024.
Application Review and Accepted by the CRA Board May 9, 2024.**

**Work to be completed is removal of existing front awning,
fabrication and installation of new 5 ft wide awning that will span
the length of the building (approx. 50 ln ft.)**

**Project Quote \$29,400
The full grant request \$10,000.**

BEFORE



**THE SAME COMPANY THAT IS INSTALLING THE AWNING AT THE SPRINGS
BUILDING, LLC PROPERTY WILL FABRICATE AND INSTALL THE AWNING ON
THIS BUILDING.**

GRANT AWARD WILL BE UPON COMPLETION IN FY 2025.

RESIDENTIAL FACADE IMPROVEMENT GRANT

The Residential Facade Improvement Grant was revamped in FY 2024.

The CRA revamped the application, created documents, and the City of High Springs PIO created an educational video to bring awareness to the program and stir up interest. The video ran on our website, various social media outlets, and TV and was highlighted Radio stations in FY 2024. The program was approved by the CRA Board on July 25, 2024. And the Residential Facade Improvement Grant Program opened to the CRA District August 2024.

We have received much interest and many inquires in the residential program. Although the CRA District is currently very narrow to the core business district and unfortunately twenty-five inquires were outside the current CRA District boundary, and ineligible by Florida Statute. (Just another example of why the expansion request is much needed.)

Two Residential Facade Improvement Applications have currently been submitted and approved for completion in FY 2025.

City of High Springs CRA Residential Improvement Grant Matching Program

Are you a homeowner whose primary residence is in need of repair? The City of High Springs CRA may be able to help with a home improvement grant. Residential façade home improvement grants may be an option to help make repairs and improvements to a home's exterior.

The CRA Residential Improvement Grant Program is designed to reduce ongoing future maintenance costs, promote energy efficiency, and to preserve decent affordable owner-occupied housing. The reimbursement grant program is designed to assist residential property owners with beautifying their properties within the CRA District. Let the CRA help "fix up" existing residential properties in the district in the hopes that it will not only beautify the City, but increase business, tourism, real estate values, and promote "pride in ownership".

The City of High Springs CRA offers a Residential Improvement Grant Matching Program to assist qualifying homeowners with financial assistance for needed home improvements to their primary residence. All improvements must be visible from the street. This Program provides a 50/50 reimbursement match for eligible improvements up to \$5,000. Available funds are limited and available on a first come first serve basis.

General Guidelines

- Only residential properties located within the City of High Springs Community Redevelopment District are eligible for this grant.
- The program provides a 50% matching grant reimbursement of actual, eligible, and verified projects that were incurred, not to exceed \$5000.
- Applicants must match grant funds dollar-for-dollar for goods and/or services. Work done by the owner will not be funded for labor.
- Grants are intended for rehabilitation and restoration only. New construction is ineligible.
- Funding is on a first come first serve basis. Applicants must finish the project and pay all project costs before being eligible for reimbursement. If work is tied to a building permit, the building permit must be inspected and completed.
- All applicants that are awarded a grant acknowledge that "cash receipts" will not be accepted due to auditing standards. Eligible reimbursements must have been paid for by check, money order, or by credit card. Verification of payment shall be submitted with reimbursement request and Affidavit of Construction Completion.
- The grant application must receive approval by the Community Redevelopment Agency Board before any construction can commence. No grants will be awarded on an application if work has been started or completed.
- If the grant application is for building/properties within the Historic District applicant must receive all applicable Certificates of Appropriateness from the Historic Preservation Board before the grant application is considered for funding.
- Applicants will be required to obtain proper permitting through the Planning, Development and Codes Department before any application will be approved.
- All grant recipients must complete a W-9 Tax Form and will receive a 1099 Tax Form for their award.
- The project must be completed in a timely fashion in strict accordance with the timeframe specified by the Community Redevelopment Agency within Façade Improvement Agreement.
- The Community Redevelopment Agency shall disperse funds to the grant recipient only upon demonstration that the work has been completed (Affidavit of Construction Completion) and provide required proof of costs and payment, in the form of paid receipts/invoice documentation.
- Documentation of property ownership and homestead exemption. The property owner will be required to sign the Grant Agreement to assume responsibility to maintain occupancy and homestead exemption for one year after the completion of the project.
- Confirmation that mortgage, property insurance, and property tax payments are current and in good standing.

RESIDENTIAL FACADE GRANT APPLICANTS

Application submitted September 9, 2024.

Application Review and Accepted by the CRA Board September 12, 2024.

Project Quote \$4944.00

The full grant request \$2472.

BEFORE



IN PROGRESS
GRANT AWARD WILL BE UPON COMPLETION IN FY 2025.

Application submitted October 16, 2024

**Application Review and Accepted by the CRA Board at
November 13, 2024 meeting**

Project Quote \$13000

The full grant request \$5000

BEFORE



IN PROGRESS

GRANT AWARD WILL BE UPON COMPLETION IN FY 2025.

BEAUTIFICATION

The CRA Beautification Team serves our residents, businesses, and visitors by providing care and maintenance to landscaping and cleanliness to areas in the downtown district. Many vehicles and people travel on High Springs Main Street and US HWY 27, the two main roads in the High Springs CRA District. In Fiscal Year 2024 the beautification crew planted and maintained the desert planters that the CRA purchased in FY 2023. The hanging baskets and planters throughout the CRA District add a beautiful, quaint, and well-maintained atmosphere to the shopping and business district. Shop owners and visitors alike continually comment on how wonderful the district is looking since the beautification crew has been in place. The change is palpable. The Beautification Crew are dedicated and conscience city employees that focus on beautifying the district. Our goal is to make sure our citizens and business owners are proud to live and work in the High Springs CRA District, and that it is welcoming to our many visitors.

In Fiscal Year 2025 the CRA is partnering with the High Springs Garden Club in the Spring to replant and continue to beautify the district.



APPROPRIATION FOR THE PRIEST

In FY 2023 the City of High Springs applied for and acquired an appropriation grant from the State of Florida, Department of State, Division of Historical Resources for \$1,040,450 to preserve this cultural landmark.

The Priest Theater is a 1910 era historic building located in downtown High Springs. It was one of the oldest running movie theaters in the state until COVID hit, upon which time it closed. In the last few years, the Priest Theater has encountered structural issues which make it uninhabitable. It now sits vacant and in blighted condition.

The Priest Theater is located on prime real estate in the heart of the downtown CRA District. Revitalization of the building will be a catalyst project that will stimulate development throughout the downtown area. As one of the longest running movie theaters in Florida, the Priest Theater is an important part of Florida's heritage. The state of Florida recognizes this and agreed to the appropriation grant of \$1,040,450 to preserve this cultural landmark. The state funds if accepted will be used to acquire the building, repair the roof, make structural improvements, etc. to prevent the collapse of the building and a loss of history.

The High Springs Commission decided in FY 2024 to accept the appropriation and begin the acquisition process for the property.

The Priest was purchased for \$350,000 on May 3, 2024.

Approval has been awarded to Paul Stressing Associates Inc. Field work, structural engineering, and structural mitigation will begin in FY 2025. The Historic Priest Theater Chairs are scheduled to be removed and stored in beginning of FY 2025 prior to construction commencing.

This is very exciting redevelopment in the CRA District.



CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PROJECT APPROVAL

WATER TOWER PARKING LOT PROJECT

There is a need for additional parking in the CRA Business District. With the opening and success of the Watershed Restaurant this need has been amplified.

Parking and Traffic have been an issue for High Springs CRA Business District. The original 1986 Strategic Plan recognized this, and it is still an issue today.

At our September 2024 CRA meeting the CRA Board granted our request to move forward with a plan to expand and improve parking in the district.

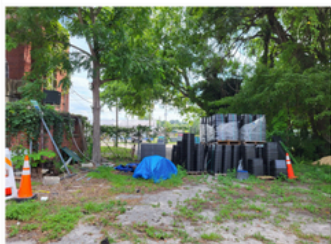
Currently we have determined that the city owned area under the High Springs Water Tower is under-utilized and in blighted condition. The CRA was granted approval to explore options to convert this area into ecofriendly public parking by the CRA Board, City Manager, and Public Works Department.

In FY 2025 we envision enhancing surrounding streets with sidewalks and lighting to improve walkability in the district. Goal is to invest in infrastructure that will alleviate some parking issues and improve the overall appearance of downtown.

A redevelopment of this area will add much needed parking to the downtown area and improve traffic flow. Making for safer travel for vehicles, pedestrians, and other modes of travel and transportation within this area of the district.



PROPOSED PARKING REVAMP AREA



PROMOTIONAL ACTIVITIES

FARMERS MARKET

The High Springs Farmers Market creates a weekly Friday event that not only provides access to fresh, local food but also builds community and brings visitors to the CRA District.

For over twenty years, the High Springs Farmers Market has provided space for local farmers, ranchers, and bakers to sell their fresh, wholesome products. The Farmer’s Market Manager has worked diligently to maintain and grow the High Springs Farmers Market. The Market invested in new weekly yard signs and also market bags for sale. The bags cover the cost of the signage and also serve as a memento and advertising for the market.

In FY 2024 the High Springs Farmers Market proudly earned the prestigious 2nd place for Favorite Local Farmers Market from Our Town Magazine’s Fave 2024 Contest. Adding to the excitement, our market edged out the Alachua County Farmers Market by one slot, giving us well-deserved bragging rights.

Throughout FY 2024 the Farmer’s Market Manager continued to invigorate the market. She represents the market and brings awareness, excitement, and stewardship over the market.

The goal of the market is to continually strive for increased community participation and attendance. In 2024 we began work to curate the High Springs Farmers Market into a destination and a perfect fit for the High Springs Community. Market progress and improvement has begun and will continue in FY 2025.



POLICING INITIATIVES

In FY 2024 The High Springs Police Department, in partnership with the High Springs CRA, developed an innovative comprehensive program to improve actual and perceived security within the CRA District. Area residents, businesses, customers, and tourists attend the many events in the downtown CRA Business District making it a destination location. Through an interlocal agreement, HSPD provided enhanced policing services to ensure the safety of all in attendance.

The CRA Board during September 12, 2024, meeting voted for approval of an interlocal agreement for enhanced policing services in the CRA District. The agreement allows for \$5000 for the purchase of innovative policing equipment (electric bicycle) to be used in the CRA District. The purchase will be in early FY 2025 in preparation for the holiday festivities.



EVENTS IN THE DISTRICT

This past year, the High Springs CRA district was home to many family friendly events. The High Springs CRA directly co-sponsored with the High Springs Chamber of Commerce, Kiwanis, the City of High Springs Police Department, and City Departments to strive to provide safe downtown events and initiatives. Below are several events that were held in the High Springs CRA District during FY 2024.

- PIONEER DAYS (CHAMBER OF COMMERCE)
- FALL FESTIVAL (CHAMBER OF COMMERCE)
- ART WALKS (LANZA, UNIQUE NOTIONS)
- CHRISTMAS PARADE (CHAMBER OF COMMERCE)
- CHRISTMAS TREE LIGHTING (CHAMBER OF COMMERCE)
- CAR SHOWS (LYONS CLUB, HIGH SPRINGS BREWERY)
- PUMPKIN DECORATING CONTEST (KIWANIS)

And many other events and live music by the many restaurants, businesses, and civic organizations in the High Springs Community Redevelopment business district.



FINANCIALS

PROJECTS STARTED & COMPLETED

• CRA Strategic Plan Update	\$ 7,300
• Farmers Market Consultant	\$ 450
• Farmers Market Promotion	\$ 500
• CRA Printing and Promotion	\$ 550
• Downtown Beautification	\$ 5,000
• CRA Building Improvements	\$ 5,300
• Commercial Facade Improvement Grant Program	\$ 30,500
• Policing Initiatives	\$ 11,120

TOTAL COST OF ALL PROJECTS	\$ 60,720
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Total Expenditures from Redevelopment Trust Fund	\$ 193,459
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FY 2024 Budget Total	\$ 336,878
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Additional Funds to be Spent Next Budget Year	\$ 143,419
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1989, Original Assessed Property Value	\$ 3,832,000
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January 1, 2024 Total Assessed Property Value	\$ 27,840,990
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Current Year (2024) Incremental Taxable Properties	\$ 24,008,990
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Number of Projects Started	12
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Number of Projects Completed	7
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Amount Expended for Affordable Housing	0
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The official budget and latest financial audit can be found on the City of High Springs website: www.highsprings.gov

LOOKING FORWARD

The future fiscal year 2025 in the CRA District our goal is to promote economic development and raise awareness of businesses in the CRA boundary. We will begin the downtown parking plan and work on converting unused space to additional parking and pocket parks in the community redevelopment district. With the changes to the facade grant programs for both Commercial and Residential Facade Improvement Grants the downtown district will continue to improve and thrive. We will continue to keep the community vision and CRA Strategic plan on track.

The CRA Strategic Plan serves as the guide to CRA projects and accomplishments. The focus areas of our plan include Economic Development, Sense of Place and Appearance, Transportation, Access & Mobility, Civic and Open Spaces, Environmental Sustainability, & Keepers of the Vision.

The High Springs CRA will strive to maximize the quality and impact of redevelopment for the benefit of High Springs citizens, visitors, our CRA, the City of High Springs, and Alachua County.



