

CRA HISTORY

Downtown Development Commission

1969

Downtown Development Commission ("DDC") consisting of five downtown citizens formed for the purpose of "improving the physical appearance, enhancing the economic activity, and increasing the tax base for downtown Lake Wales." (Ord. 69-3).

DDC surveyed downtown, engaged UF Planning students for their senior project, contracted with Milo Smith Planners of Tampa for streetscape design, submitted and lobbied federal grant application, conducted vote of property owners for front foot assessment bond, engaged contractor, and endured downtown upheaval for improvements.

1973

Completion of downtown streetscape funded 50% by Federal Legacy of Parks grant and 50% by front foot against benefited properties.

Front foot assessment drives off out-of-town owners, who sell to local investors. Downtown tax base increases. Downtown receives national award for public landscaping.

1983

Benefited property owners complete payments on ten-year front foot assessments. Bonds were satisfied leaving surplus funds.

DDC Transitions into CRA

1985

Dec. 3, DDC becomes Community Redevelopment Agency ("CRA") created under F.S.163.370 to continue the revitalization of traditional downtown business district. (Area 1). The five citizens previously serving on the Downtown Development Commission plus the Mayor and the Chairman of the Planning Board appointed to the CRA Board formed as a separate entity distinct from the City Commission. (Ord. 85-10).

1987

Lake Wales chosen in competition with other downtowns in the state as one of five Main Street cities. Full time Main Street Manager retained as part of the requirements for the Main Street designation.

1988

June 30, CRA extended West to Highway 27 and South to Bullard Avenue which created CRA Area 2. (Ord. 88-8).

Separate CRA Board Abolished

1990

In May, City Commission rescinded powers previously granted to separate CRA Board and assumed all powers of the CRA for itself. Previous CRA Board changed to advisory status. (Ord. 90-03).

June 19, CRA expanded to include most of the Northwest area with designation as CRA Area 3. (Ord. 90-05).

1993

June 15, further expansion of CRA Area 3, designated CRA Area 3a. (Ord. 93-07).

1995

Full time Main Street Manager leaves for Winter Haven. City assigns a succession of City employees part time for the task. Downtown begins decline.

1997

July 22, City uses Utility System Revenue Bonds to buy Cooperative Fruit Company property for \$2.4 million.

Nov., Cooperative Fruit Property on both sides of U.S. 27 annexed into City.

Dec., City approves zoning and future land use classifications, showing tract on west side of U.S. 27 designated as future industrial/business park.

1999

Effective Jan. 1, Polk County becomes a charter government.

CRA Boundaries Expanded

CRA area expanded to include Cooperative Fruit Property, CRA Areas 2 and 3a, and most of the rest of the City. Expanded area designated as the "Extended Area" of the CRA. CRA Area 1 and CRA Area 3 retain separate status in order to keep their original base years for calculating tax increment. Base year for Extended Area set at January 1, 1998. (Ord. 99-02).

June 1, new CRA Plan adopted. (Res. 99-06). The "Cooperative Fruit Property is within the boundaries of the expanded CRA which were specifically established to include this property as the 'engine' that would drive the increase in the value of the tax increment which would, in turn, fund the redevelopment and revitalization of the 'core' city. It has been estimated that the completed business park will have an assessed value of \$75 million and yield approximately \$1.1 million in tax increment revenues on an annual basis." (Memorandum to City Commission, Aug. 28, 2001, p. 17).

2001

Oct. 16, adoption of CRA bylaws and interlocal agreement between CRA and City. (Res. 01-18).

Oct. 16, City sells CRA 164-acre Longleaf Business Park on West side of U.S. 27 for \$697,612. CRA obtains purchase price from loan proceeds from capital improvement bonds.

Beginning 9/30/99, and ending in FY 02-03, City sells to CRA the four parcels of Cooperative Fruit Property on East side of U.S. 27 for \$1,536,930. CRA obtains purchase price from loan proceeds from capital improvement bonds.

2006

CRA properties on East side of U.S. 27 sold to developers of the proposed Mayfair project (Feltrim Development, Inc.) for \$2.66 million, effectively reimbursing the CRA for its purchase of Cooperative Fruit Property on both sides of U.S. 27.

2007

June 12, memorandum from City Manager recommending adoption of new Community Redevelopment Plan and showing Plan's Project List.

June 19, adoption of Community Redevelopment Plan. (Res. 07-14).

Dec. 18, CRA Bond Note for \$9,500,000 issued to fund Redevelopment Plan's Project List throughout the City's expanded CRA.

CRA Boundaries Contracted

2011

June 2, Proposal to contract CRA boundaries by deleting Longleaf property from CRA so growth in the City portion of the tax increment would go to General Fund rather than CRA Trust Fund, resulting in the County portion of the tax increment being lost to the Trust Fund. City Administration referenced Staff Report prepared in 2001, stating that the Cooperative Fruit Property was

specifically established as the "engine" to fund the redevelopment and revitalization of the core city.

Annual loss of tax increment to CRA Trust Fund estimated at \$124,246 in the first year and, at build-out, \$2,886,910. Of those losses, the County portion of the increment amounted to \$59,832 in the first year, and an estimated \$1,390,228 per year at build-out. Thus, as a result of the contraction, those funds would be kept by the County rather than deposited in the CRA Trust Fund. (Minutes, meeting, CRA Commission, June 2, p. 9)

Commission nonetheless votes 4-1 in favor of contraction.

Different Policy Regarding CRA Trust Fund

2016

City elections in April of 2016 brought an emphasis on the proper use of the CRA Trust Fund. Sale of CRA property plus accumulating tax increment begins to build Trust Fund for revitalization of City's historic core.

2020

CRA enters into agreement with the reconstituted Main Street Program for a collaboration to serve as a catalyst for revitalization of the city's historic core. The collaboration leads to the retention of the Dover Kohl Town Planning firm, extensive public participation, and the creation of the Lake Wales Connected Plan.

2021

The Lake Wales Connected Plan is within the CRA budget and is now underway.