



Redevelopment Projects

Fort Myers Community Redevelopment Agency (CRA)

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Riverfront Development Plan and Riverfront Basin



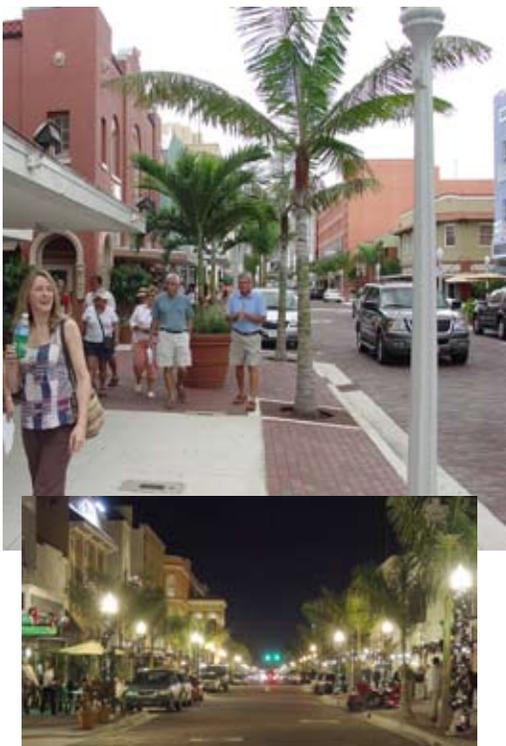
Riverfront development plans and Phase I, Riverfront Basin, completed. Subsequent phases ongoing.

Description: CRA contracted a team led by *Acquest Realty Advisors, Inc.*, to prepare a master plan and feasibility study for the underused downtown waterfront. Their plan was adopted in April 2010. Following plan adoption, the development consultant team changed roles to project developer, with a scope of services that includes securing public and private funding, marketing and pre-leasing activities, developing land disposition policies and pricing, negotiating development agreements with private property owners within the study area, and preparing preliminary architectural design concepts. As project developer, the team is responsible for final designs, permitting, financing, leasing, construction and management of the project. Development will be executed in phases.

Results: Plans call for the riverfront to become a unique shopping and dining experience, with local and regional merchants offering quality merchandise and personal services that can only be provided by a local shop owner.

Status: Phase I, the Riverfront Basin, completed in December 2012; Subsequent development ongoing

Downtown Utility Replacement & Streetscape Improvement



Fort Myers Community Redevelopment Agency (CRA) funded streetscape improvements following City-financed underground utility replacement

Description: The City of Fort Myers financed the underground utility replacement portion (water, sewer and drainage) of a \$54 million utility replacement & streetscape improvement project for a 54-block downtown area, while the CRA funded \$12.5 million for the streetscape beautification portion (brick streets including reused original brick, brick-lined concrete sidewalks, royal palm trees, street lights and wayfinding signs). CRA also implemented a *Common Area Maintenance (CAM)* subsidy program to assist businesses when construction closed the street in front of them.

Results: The streets' attractiveness spurred a dramatic increase in pedestrian and vehicular traffic, resulting in 18 new restaurant and retail businesses.

Status: Complete



McCollum Hall

Purchase and restoration of the historic music hall and retail space

Description: McCollum Hall, built circa 1938 with Art Deco features, was a popular entertainment venue in the 1930s and 1940s where famous African-American musicians and entertainers performed, including Duke Ellington, Count Basie, Louis Armstrong and B.B. King. It was cited as a key element to successful redevelopment of the Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard Redevelopment District. CRA purchased the property in May 2008, as well as buying adjoining tracts of land. A developer has been contracted by the CRA to restore and redevelop the hall and surrounding property. Completed so far is property clean-up, sign installation informing the public of the plans for the building, and stabilizing the building keep it intact prior to official construction.



Stabilization Completed



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Results: Ongoing work on McCollum Hall, as well as continued efforts to keep the public informed of its progress, has encouraged neighboring residents and businesses that implementation of the redevelopment plan for the district continues despite bad economic times.

Status: Phase I through stabilization complete; Phase II development ongoing

Development Assistance, Landscape & Façade Grants

Matching grants to commercial property owners for development assistance and landscape & façade upgrades

Description: CRA offers Development Assistance, Landscape and Façade Grants to commercial property owners and businesses in several of the redevelopment districts. Matching grants are reimbursable when work is complete. Development assistance grants aid new development and redevelopment projects with predevelopment costs like engineering, architectural and permitting expenses. Landscape and/or Façade Grants provide matching construction grant funds, aimed at upgrading the appearance, property value, and economic activity of the district through enhanced natural aesthetics.

Results: Several businesses and property owners have obtained grants and are in the process of finishing, or have successfully completed, work. The *City Center 41 Shopping Center* project was awarded a Landscape/Façade Grant. *GRW/Orthopedic Specialists* used a Development Assistance Grant to plan a landscape unifying its office building and newly-constructed Surgery Center. *Ark of Safety Daycare Center* received Landscape and Façade Grants to greatly enhance their property's overall appearance.

Status: Ongoing



City Center 41 Shopping Center



After

Ark of Safety Daycare Center



Before



After



Office Building



Surgery Center

GRW/Orthopedic Specialists

Sidney & Berne Davis Art Center/Florida Arts, Inc.

CRA has provided assistance in the restoration and operation of the Art Center, which attracts thousands of patrons each year

Description: The Sidney & Berne Davis Art Center is a majestic neoclassical building that began its life as a *Works Progress Administration (WPA)* project in 1933. Over the decades it housed a Post Office and later a federal courthouse, and was acquired by the city in 1998 when the CRA assembled a site for a new courthouse. The non-profit *Florida Arts, Inc.*, chose to revive the abandoned structure into a visual and performing arts center for regional and internationally-renowned artists and began fundraising for extensive renovations, raising over \$3 million so far. CRA has provided funding for the restoration and operation of the Sidney & Berne Davis Art Center, which has been renewed to a popular gathering place for residents and visitors of Fort Myers.

Results: The Art Center draws thousands of patrons to the Downtown Redevelopment District who attend its art shows, musical performances, theater, film festivals and premiers, special events and charity galas, and children's plays. Eventually, *Florida Arts, Inc.*, intends to also hold workshops, art classes, and exhibitions.

Status: Ongoing



Publix Grocery Store

Development incentives result in a unique store design

Description: CRA partnered a high-rise developer and national real estate firm to bring a top-brand, full-service grocery store to the downtown district as a way to attract residents. Since the site was on a residential, state-recognized historic scenic highway, CRA worked closely with the grocer and developers to design a store façade maintaining the area's beauty. A five-year rent abatement of \$600,000 per year from tax increment funds enticed Publix to open the store before completion of surrounding residential development. Innovations include placing the front of the store and parking lot in the center of the block while decorating the back of the store bordering the historic highway like a high-quality storefront with faux windows, doors and architectural



features; fully-enclosing all unattractive functions like loading docks and dumpsters for visual/sound protection including an attractive roof for nice views from above; and screening the parking lot with townhomes, retail shops, and a landscaped trellis.

Results: The store has boosted sales in the surrounding new and existing residential developments as well as encouraging improvements in surrounding commercial developments.

Status: Complete

Arcade Theatre Building/Florida Repertory Theatre



Rent, operating expense, and building repair subsidies are provided to the Florida Repertory Theatre, which attracts thousands of visitors to the district each year

Description: The Arcade Theatre was built in 1908 with all the charm and grandeur of early Florida. It originally served as a Vaudeville house and the auditorium where Fort Myers winter resident Thomas Edison viewed his first films with friends Henry Ford and Harvey Firestone. Eventually it was converted into a full movie house, but by 1989 it had fallen into disuse and complete disrepair. Two years later, a benefit starring ballet and film star Mikhail Baryshnikov raised enough money to completely restore the historic building. In 1998, the Florida Repertory Theatre troupe moved into the Arcade Theatre and began breathing new life into the Downtown Redevelopment District as thousands of patrons flocked to theatre productions each season. To support their efforts on behalf of the benefits to the district, CRA subsidizes the Florida Repertory Theatre in rent, operating expenses, and building repairs.

Results: Each season, the Florida Repertory Theatre attracts over 70,000 patrons to enjoy the plays and often add dining at a downtown restaurant to the evening's activities. The Florida Repertory Theatre also sponsors children's theatre, summer camp, and year-round acting classes for both children and adults, reaching over 14,000 young people annually who also frequent downtown businesses as part of their experience.

Status: Ongoing



Downtown Library Facility Joint Government Venture

Research & land acquisition facilitated by the CRA for a joint venture between the City of Fort Myers and Lee County governments

Description: CRA and the Community Development Department facilitated research and land acquisition of a downtown site to build a new, larger (50,000 square feet) Lee County library facility. Several sites were presented, but the 3.13 acre block chosen on the Bank of America Block, owned by *Hickory Company LLC.*, meets three criteria: it is consistent with the Downtown Redevelopment District's "Duany" Master Plan, it creates the Eastern Anchor for First Street recommended in the Plan, and the parking block matches the Plan exactly. The site provides other advantages such as the ease of surface parking access with 175-200 available parking spaces, no demolition required due to the site's lack of structures, and its availability for immediate purchase. Thanks in part to the efforts of the CRA, in September 2009, the Fort Myers City Council and the Lee County Board of Commissioners approved an Interlocal Agreement to build a new \$20 million downtown library facility at the southwest corner of First Street and Royal Palm Avenue. With land purchased by the City, the County is funding the design, permitting, construction, and furnishings costs of a new library double the size of the current downtown facility.

Results: Economic spin-off from library construction and potential new development on the balance of the block is projected to recoup tax loss from the site being removed from tax rolls as it becomes a public space.

Status: Complete

