

FORT MYERS COMMUNITY REDEVELOPMENT AGENCY



2022-2023 Annual Report
October 1, 2022 - September 30, 2023

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FORT MYERS COMMUNITY REDEVELOPMENT AGENCY



Images ©Kinlay Moroti

INTRODUCTION

Imagine a city where every neighborhood is a vibrant, thriving place to live, work, and play. Where every resident has access to quality amenities and every business can flourish. Together, we can make this vision a reality.

SINCE 1984
[§ 163.356, Fla. Stat.]
The Fort Myers Community Redevelopment Agency of the City of Fort Myers (CRA) was first created as the Downtown Redevelopment Agency at the request of the late Council person Veronica S. Shoemaker. The goal was to revitalize downtown's commercial district, which was listed on the National Register of Historic Places on January 26, 1990. The area is now branded as the Downtown River District.



CHARTING A NEW COURSE FOR FORT MYERS

Dear Community Members, Stakeholders, and Partners,



“Guided by a shared vision and relentless dedication, we’re building a Fort Myers that resonates with progress and community spirit.”

As this transformative year draws to a close, I am filled with a deep sense of pride and gratitude for the remarkable progress we have made in revitalizing and enriching Fort Myers. Under the guiding principles of [§ 163.356, Fla. Stat.], The City of Fort Myers Community Redevelopment Agency (CRA) has relentlessly pursued a vision of transformation and growth. Despite challenges, including the aftermath of Hurricane Ian, our community’s resilience and unwavering spirit have shone brightly, reflecting the strength and determination that fuel our collective efforts.

This year, our dedication to beautification, infrastructure enhancement, and place making has been vibrantly displayed through an array of projects and programs. From the vision to initiate the innovative “Common Ground” Pocket Park on First Street, each initiative has played a crucial role in fostering a more dynamic, welcoming, and prosperous Fort Myers. Our achievements extend beyond physical redevelopment; they embody our commitment to nurturing a robust community spirit and catalyzing economic vitality.

Significant strides have been made in expanding affordable housing, enhancing the aesthetic appeal of our streets, and revitalizing commercial facades, all of which have rekindled pride and a sense of belonging among our residents. Our initiatives in transforming public spaces into active hubs of social and cultural interaction have furthered our goal of building a cohesive community fabric.

In an effort to increase our tax base, the CRA is unwavering in its commitment to champion projects that promote sustainable growth, inclusivity, and the distinctive character of our city. We are determined to work in partnership with residents, businesses, and stakeholders to ensure our shared vision for Fort Myers continues to blossom.

In conclusion, I extend my deepest gratitude to each of you for your ongoing support, collaboration, and dedication to our city. Your engagement and contributions are crucial in shaping a Fort Myers that is vibrant and forward-looking. Together, we look forward to a future filled with growth and new opportunities, continuing our journey towards a city that is not just a place to live, but a place to thrive.

Sincerely,

Teresa Watkins Brown

Teresa Watkins Brown
Chair, Board of Commissioners
Fort Myers Community Redevelopment Agency

FORT MYERS





FORT MYERS

In this vicinity, Caloosa Indian villages were located in ancient times. Around this site, in the Seminole War of 1841-1842, a fort was established and named for Lieutenant John Harvie. The fort was re-established in 1850 and named Fort Myers, honoring Lieutenant Abraham C. Myers. This Seminole War ended in 1858. During the War Between the States, Fort Myers was once more re-activated as a base to round up wild cattle to supply beef to Federal gunboats patrolling the Gulf off Sanibel.

FLORIDA BOARD OF PARKS AND HISTORIC MEMORIALS
"THE SOUTHWEST" FLORIDA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

#-128

1988

REDEVELOPMENT
REVITALIZATION
REINVESTMENT

“This year’s journey showcases our commitment to transformative projects and strategic partnerships, driving a new era of urban development in Fort Myers.”



CATALYZING URBAN RENEWAL AND GROWTH

To Our Esteemed Community,

As I reflect on the past year, it is with a sense of profound pride and accomplishment that I present the 2023 Annual Report for the City of Fort Myers Community Redevelopment Agency (CRA). Our journey this year, guided by the principles of [§ 163.356, Fla. Stat.], has been one of significant progress, innovation, and community engagement in revitalizing Fort Myers.

This year has been our mission to transform redeveloped areas in the city come to life through a diverse array of impactful projects and programs. Our holistic approach to urban redevelopment has been evident in initiatives like the Commercial Property Improvement Grants, enhancing commercial corridors, and the Residential Paint Program, which have fostered a renewed sense of pride among residents. Moreover, our partnership with organizations like Habitat for Humanity Lee County and Catalyst Community Capital highlights our commitment to developing affordable housing, a cornerstone of our strategy to nurture a vibrant and inclusive community.

I am particularly proud of the strides we have made in commercial revitalization. Our Commercial Property Improvement Matching Grant program has not only enhanced the visual appeal of our commercial corridors but has also spurred economic growth and attracted new businesses. The success of these initiatives could not have been achieved without the tireless support of our Board of Commissioners, Advisory Board, dedicated staff, and the collaborative spirit of our community partners. Their contributions have been instrumental in making a meaningful impact across Fort Myers.

As we look to the future, we remain steadfast in our commitment to building upon our successes and pursuing innovative strategies that promote sustainable growth, vibrant community development, and a dynamic Fort Myers. The challenges and opportunities ahead are an invitation to continue our collaborative journey, unlocking the full potential of our city. Thank you for your unwavering support and engagement in the work of the CRA. Together, we are not just shaping a city; we are creating a legacy of prosperity and inclusiveness for the future generations of Fort Myers.

Sincerely,

Michele Hylton-Terry

Michele Hylton-Terry

Executive Director

Fort Myers Community Redevelopment Agency



#RedevelopmentWorks



“Through collective efforts and unwavering commitment, we’re turning aspirations into tangible realities for the future of our city.”

FOSTERING UNITY FOR COMMUNITY ADVANCEMENT

As we reflect on a year of significant progress and meaningful achievements, it is clear that the City of Fort Myers Community Redevelopment Agency stands as a beacon of positive transformation. Our efforts in areas such as historic preservation, beautification, and infrastructure have not only enhanced the aesthetic of our city but also strengthened its social and economic framework.

All of our initiatives are more than just physical improvements; they are symbols of our commitment to celebrating our city’s diverse heritage and fostering a thriving community.

As we look forward, I am inspired by the potential of our continued partnership with the community. Together, we are shaping a Fort Myers that uplifts its residents today while laying a foundation for a prosperous future.

Thank you for your ongoing support and engagement. Let’s continue to harness our collective strength to enrich our city’s life and landscape.

Sincerely,

Dr. Mellone F. Long

Dr. Mellone F. Long, AICP
Assistant Director
Fort Myers Community Redevelopment Agency

CRA LEADERSHIP



Teresa Watkins Brown
CRA Board of Commissioners
Chair



Dr. Liston D. Bochette III
CRA Board of Commissioners,
Vice-Chair



Kevin Anderson
CRA Board of Commissioners



Darla Bonk
CRA Board of Commissioners



Fred Burson
CRA Board of Commissioners



Johnny W. Streets, Jr.
CRA Board of Commissioners



Terolyn Watson
CRA Board of Commissioners



Michele Hylton-Terry
CRA Executive Director



Clifford B. Shepard
General Counsel

VISION

A VIBRANT AND PROSPEROUS COMMUNITY FREE OF SLUM AND BLIGHT.

MISSION

PROVIDE EQUITABLE, IMPACTFUL INCENTIVES, WHILE IMPLEMENTING REDEVELOPMENT PLANS THAT ENABLE REVITALIZATION AND FOSTER ENGAGEMENT AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR STAKEHOLDERS, USING SOUND FISCAL PRACTICES AND PROFESSIONAL STAFF TO IMPROVE QUALITY OF LIFE FOR OUR DIVERSE COMMUNITY.

VALUES

INTEGRITY • RESPECT • EXCELLENCE • TEAMWORK • CURIOSITY

RESOURCES:

FORT MYERS COMMUNITY REDEVELOPMENT AGENCY WWW.FORTMYERSGRA.COM

FLORIDA REDEVELOPMENT ASSOCIATION WWW.REDEVELOPMENT.NET

CRA TEAM

ADVISORY BOARD

Jarrett Eady, Chair

James Holloway, Vice Chair

C. Joe Coleman, Board Member

Michael Doyle, Board Member

Blake Bartholomew, Board Member

Rachel Smith, Board Member

Geraldine Ware, Board Member

STAFF MEMBERS:

Dr. Mellone F. Long, Assistant Director

LaShaun Middlebrooks Collier,
Deputy Director of Communications

Lorraine Bailey-Hayden, Fiscal Manager

Xavier Colón, Redevelopment Manager

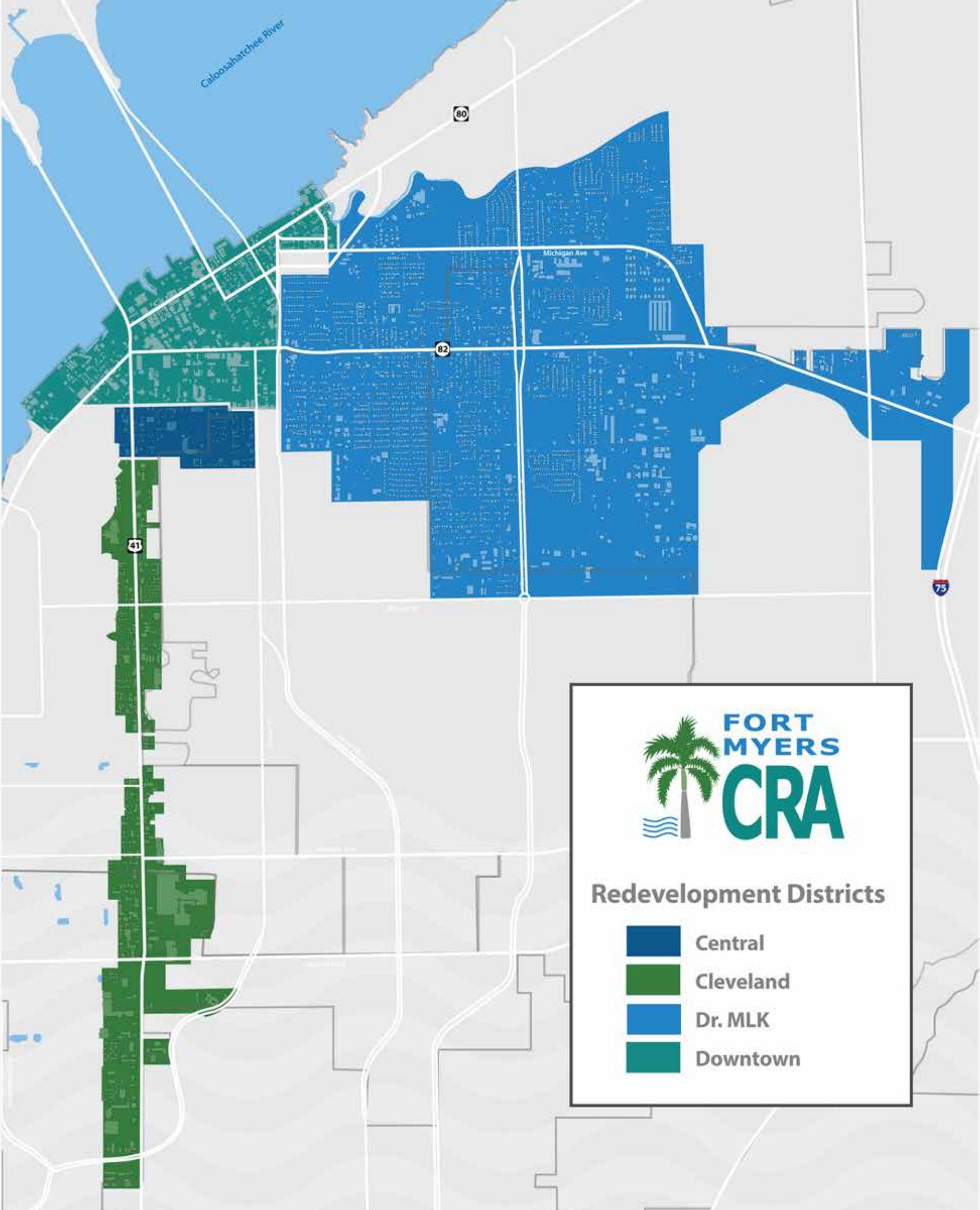
Denise Croon, Senior Administrative Assistant

INTERNS





Luis (Tony) Garrido Giambo & Nykealah Wright



FOR MYERS COMMUNITY



Redevelopment Districts

-  Central
-  Cleveland
-  Dr. MLK
-  Downtown

DOWNTOWN

REDEVELOPMENT AREA

Downtown Fort Myers' brick-lined streets lead up from a picturesque waterfront newly energized with charming restaurants, shops, art galleries, and performance spaces. The Downtown redevelopment area, also known as the River District, is the city's historic and cultural core. It's a dynamic mix of homes, work, and play, in which people of all kinds are confidently invested. The River District combines commercial and residential in a walkable neighborhood that preserves the style of the past while pointing to the wave of the future.



DR. MLK JR. BLVD.

REDEVELOPMENT AREA

A palm-lined street full of neighborhood retail greets visitors to Fort Myers as they enter the city from I-75, heading westward along Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard (MLK). Monuments to the historical heroes of the area decorate the park-like areas along either side of the roadway, celebrating the heritage of a community that still exist. Along MLK's intersections, safe pedestrian crosswalks unite the north and south business flanks, and invite a flow of local walkers and business workers to traverse between their favorite restaurants, markets, services, and offices.



CENTRAL

REDEVELOPMENT AREA

The Central Fort Myers redevelopment area was created in 1990 to improve the neighborhood by eliminating blight, and to assemble land to build the City of Palms Park baseball stadium, which was used as the Red Sox spring training facility for many years. Most of the stadium's land assembly was soon finished, and since a significant amount of the Central Fort Myers area was publicly owned and not on tax rolls, this redevelopment area did not generate tax increment revenue for most of its life.



CLEVELAND

REDEVELOPMENT AREA

Commercial, office space, dining destinations, and residential neighborhoods seamlessly blend to make the most of fulfilling life's necessities with a splash of fun thrown in. In addition to customers, both developers and businesses flock to Cleveland Avenue due to its excellent planning and maximized incentives available through the area's Brownfield and Enterprise Zone designations. It is located south of Edison Avenue and north of the City Limits, which are just south of Boy Scout Drive.





@Kin fay Moroti





Images © Kinravy Moroff

#RedevelopmentWorks

UPDATE ON PROJECTS AND PROGRAMS

Since its inception in 1984, under the guidance of [§ 163.356, Fla. Stat.], the City of Fort Myers Community Redevelopment Agency (CRA) has been at the forefront of transforming and revitalizing the city's blighted areas. Our unwavering commitment to historic preservation, beautification, infrastructure development, and place making has been instrumental in reshaping the urban fabric of Fort Myers. This update on our current projects provides an insight into how these efforts are not only enhancing the city's aesthetic and functional aspects but also enriching the lives of its residents. From the meticulous restoration of historical landmarks to the creation of vibrant public spaces, each project is a step towards realizing our vision of a rejuvenated, inclusive, and thriving Fort Myers.

The City of Fort Myers Community Redevelopment Agency's dedication to revitalizing our community extends beyond physical projects to encompass a range of programs aimed at fostering a sustainable and vibrant urban environment. Since 1984, in alignment with [§ 163.356, Fla. Stat.], our programs have been pivotal in enhancing the quality of residential and commercial spaces, promoting affordable housing, and fostering community engagement.

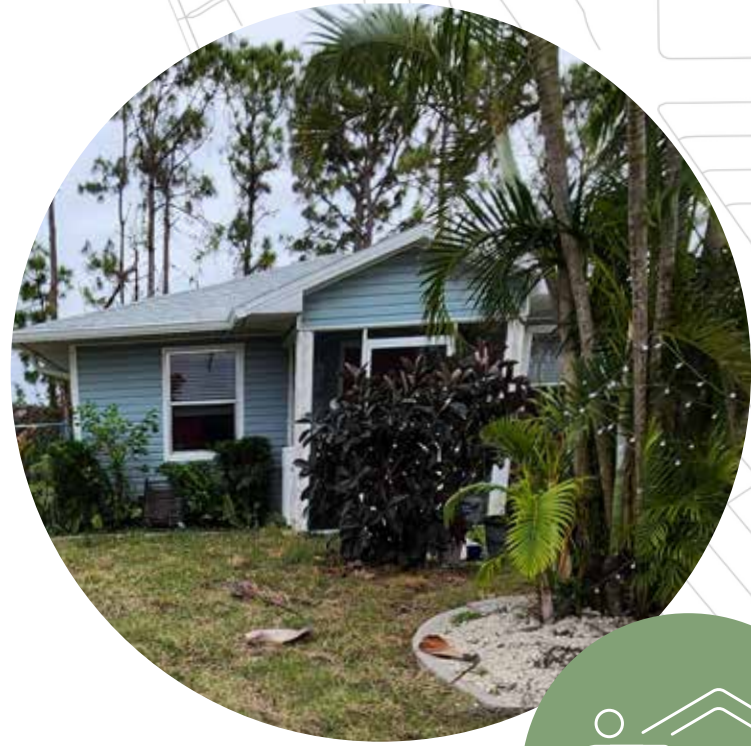
This section of the report highlights our latest endeavors in these areas, showcasing how the CRA is not just altering landscapes, but also building foundations for a stronger, more cohesive community. From empowering homeowners through our Home Preservation Program to invigorating commercial areas with our Property Improvement Grants, each program is a testament to our commitment to the holistic development of Fort Myers.



HOME PRESERVATION PROGRAM

In fiscal year 2022-2023, the Home Preservation Program made significant strides in assisting homeowners in the Dr. Martin Luther King (MLK) redevelopment area. Our goal was to eliminate slum and blight and restore the integrity of our community's homes which will positively impact the taxable values. We're proud to report that through a 5-year forgivable lien, we've provided up to \$25,000 in repairs for eligible homeowners. This initiative not only revitalizes our neighborhoods but also instills a sense of pride and stability among our residents.

- Addressing critical repairs across various properties, with total costs ranging from \$14,933.90 to \$31,448.59
- Successful completions in the year totaled \$158,243.92
- Projects underway with estimated completion dates throughout 2023-2024 total \$139,037.48



Before



After

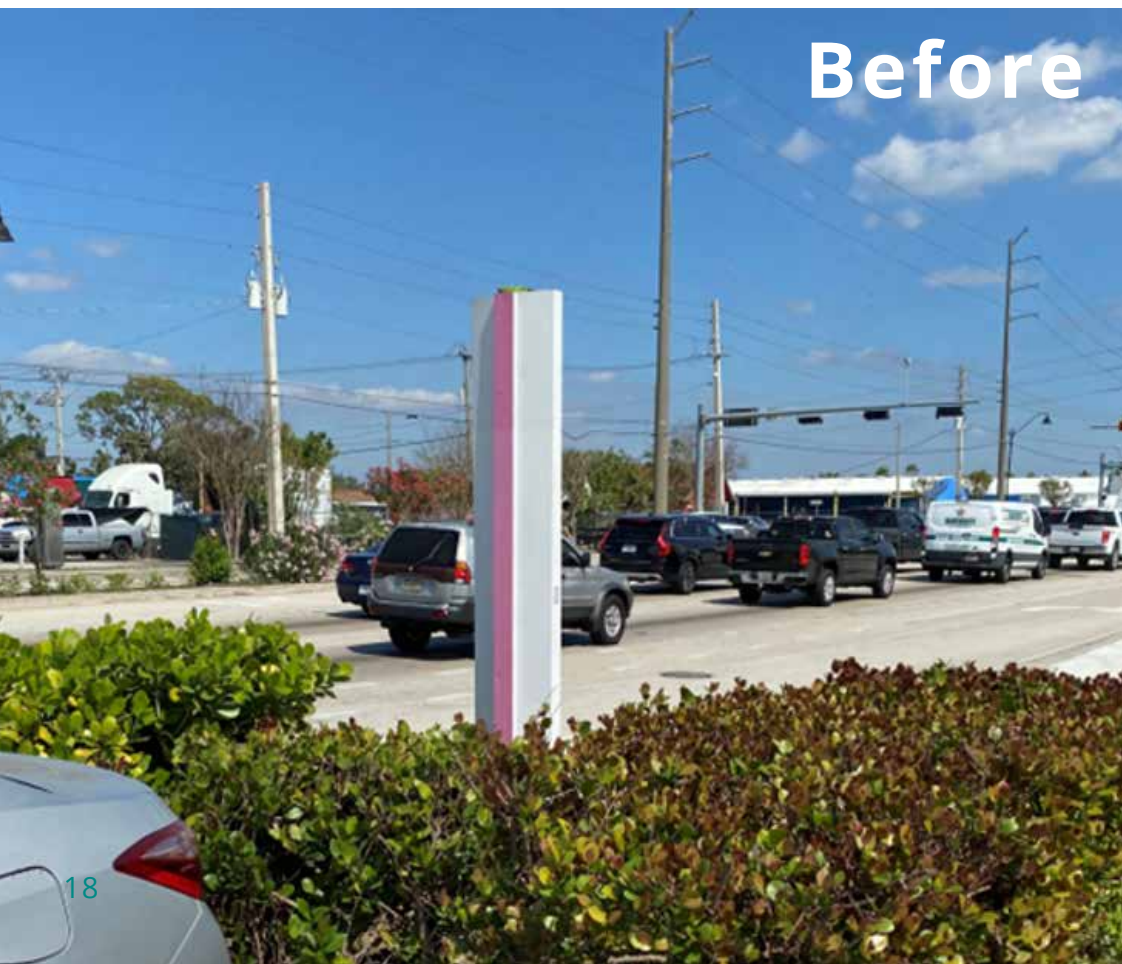


COMMERCIAL PROPERTY IMPROVEMENT GRANT PROGRAM

The Commercial Property Improvement Grant Program is a cornerstone of our efforts to invigorate Fort Myers' commercial corridors. In fiscal year 2022-2023 the program was amended to include a second tier of increasing the maximum award up to \$200,000 to attract and encourage property owners to take on more extensive renovation projects along the corridor. This program will be instrumental in enhancing property values and the visual appeal of our commercial corridors.

COMPLETED AWARDS:

- Diverse projects ranging from small businesses to larger commercial entities, with awards in tier I up to \$50,000, and tier II up to \$200,000.00
- Program awarded:
 - Downtown Trust Fund - \$205,781.08
 - Cleveland Avenue Trust Fund - \$46,508.00
 - Dr. MLK Jr. Blvd., Trust Fund - \$35,703.50



RESIDENTIAL PAINT PROGRAM

Our Residential Paint Program, focusing on beautifying homes in the Dr. MLK Jr. redevelopment area has been a resounding success. By partnering with Minority Business Enterprises (MBEs), we've not only enhanced the visual appeal of our neighborhoods but also supported local businesses. This initiative is a testament to our commitment to community development and economic inclusivity.

COMPLETED PROJECTS:

- \$100,000 has been reinvested into 20 homes, significantly contributing to neighborhood beautification and community pride.

In conclusion, the City of Fort Myers Community Redevelopment Agency remains dedicated to fostering growth, stability, and beauty in our city.

Our continued efforts in home preservation, commercial improvement, and residential aesthetics are clear indicators of our commitment to a brighter, more vibrant Fort Myers.



Registered Agent	Mrs. Michele Hylton-Terry
Office/ Mailing Address	1400 Jackson St., Suite 102, Fort Myers, FL 33901
Telephone	(239) 321-7100
Email	mhylton@cityftmyers.com
Fax	n/a
Website	www.fortmyerscra.com
County(ies)	Lee
Date Created/Established	Monday, September 17, 1984
Creation Documents	City Ordinances 2249, 2420, 2842, 2843, 2844 and 2845
Board Selection	Identical to Local Governing Authority
Authority to Issue Bonds	Yes
Revenue	Tax Increment Financing
Most Recent Update	Wednesday, March 31, 2021
Total number of Activities Types Started	4
Total number of Activities Types Completed	4
Current Year Taxable Value in CRA	\$1,416,568,167.00
Actual expended increment revenue	\$7,004,277.62
Base Year Taxable Value in CRA	\$526,947,501.00
Current Year Tax Increment Value	\$889,620,666.00
Total amount expended for low & middle income affordable housing	\$794,155.00

FINANCIALS

Type	Source	Amount
Current Year Taxable Value in CRA	DOR DR420 TIF Sect I(1)	\$ 1,416,568,167.00
Base Year Taxable Value in CRA	DOR DR420 TIF Sect I(2)	\$ 526,947,501.00
Current Year Tax Increment Value	DOR DR420 TIF Sect I(3)	\$ 889,620,666.00
Prior year Final taxable value in the tax increment area	DOR DR420 TIF Sect I(4)	\$ 1,156,043,779.00
Prior year tax increment value (Line 4 minus Line 2)	DOR DR420 TIF Sect I(5)	\$ 629,096,278.00
If the amount to be paid to the redevelopment trust fund IS BASED on a specific proportion of the tax increment value:		
Enter the portion on which the payment is based.	DOR DR420 TIF Sect II(6a)	95%
Dedicated increment value	DOR DR420 TIF Sect II(6b)	\$ 845,139,632.70
If the amount to be paid to the redevelopment trust fund IS NOT BASED on a specific proportion of the tax increment value:	Read note on cell	\$ 4,642,403.00
Actual expended increment revenue	Audit (FUND BALANCES)	7,004,277.62
Total Low and Moderate Housing Expended		\$794,155.00

REVENUE & EXPENDITURES

CRA 2022-2023

DOWNTOWN

REVENUES	EXPENSES	
INTEREST, MISC. & OTHER EARNINGS \$7,537,900.00	ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT INCENTIVES \$2,666,111.80	DEBT SERVICES \$900,000.00
DONATIONS FROM PRIVATE SOURCES \$332,952.00	OPERATING \$4,036,940.20	TRANSPORTATION INITIATIVE \$267,800.00
TOTAL \$7,870,852.00	TOTAL \$7,870,852.00	



REDEVELOPMENT
REVITALIZATION
REINVESTMENT

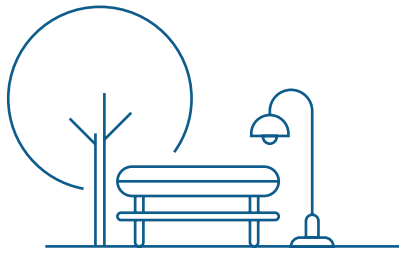
Image ©Kinray Moroti

REVENUE & EXPENDITURES


CRA 2022-2023

CENTRAL


REVENUES	EXPENSES
INCREMENT REVENUES \$205,184.00	OPERATING \$205,184.00
TOTAL \$205,184.00	TOTAL \$205,184.00



DR. MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR. BLVD.

REVENUES	EXPENSES
INCREMENT REVENUES \$2,297,644.42	ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT INCENTIVES \$1,294,628.00
	OPERATING \$691,779.42
	LAND ACQUISITION \$311,237.00
TOTAL \$2,297,644.42	TOTAL \$2,297,644.42

CLEVELAND

REVENUES	EXPENSES
INTEREST, MISC. & OTHER EARNINGS \$707,700.00	ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT INCENTIVES \$3,242,900.00
INCREMENT REVENUES \$5,097,655.00	OPERATING \$688,023.00
	BEAUTIFICATION \$1,874,432.00
	TOTAL \$5,805,355.00

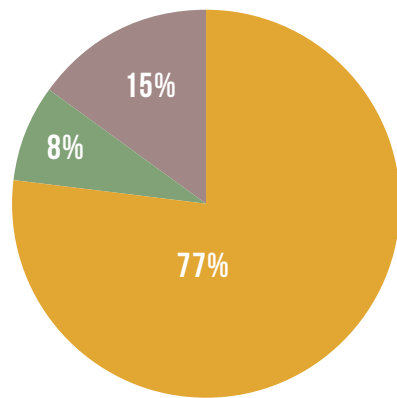
GRAND TOTAL ALL AREAS

Total Expenditures
\$16,179,035.42

Total Revenue
\$16,179,035.42

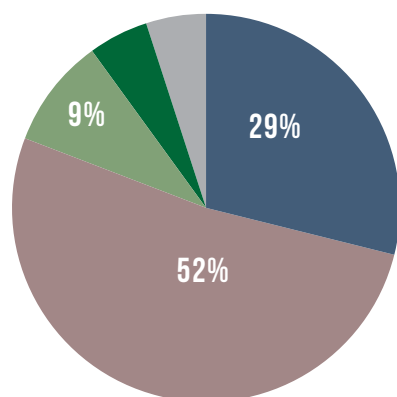
ACTIVITIES

COMPLETED (C) ACTIVITIES BY COUNT



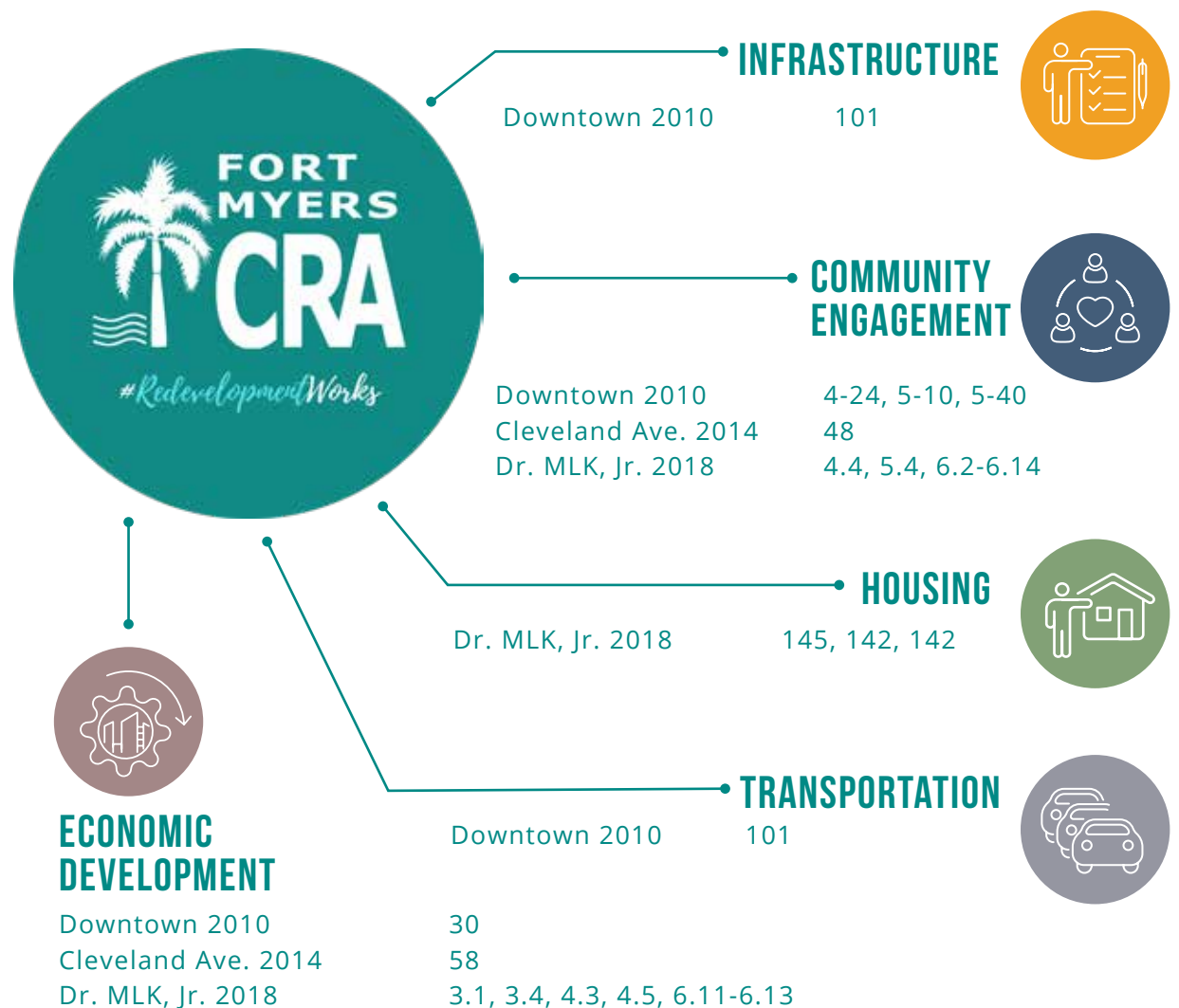
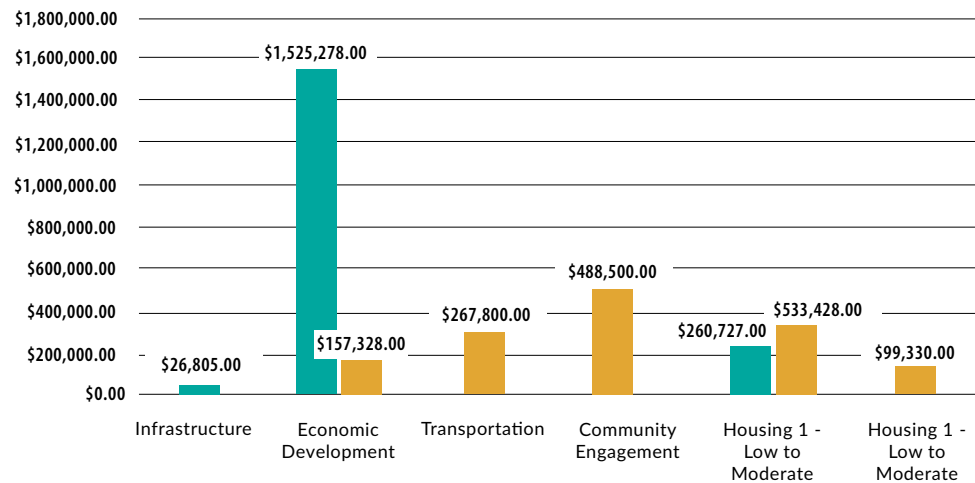
- ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
- HOUSING 1 - LOW TO MODERATE
- INFRASTRUCTURE

COMPLETED (C) ACTIVITIES BY COUNT



- COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT
- ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
- TRANSPORTATION
- HOUSING 1 - LOW TO MODERATE
- HOUSING 2 - GENERAL

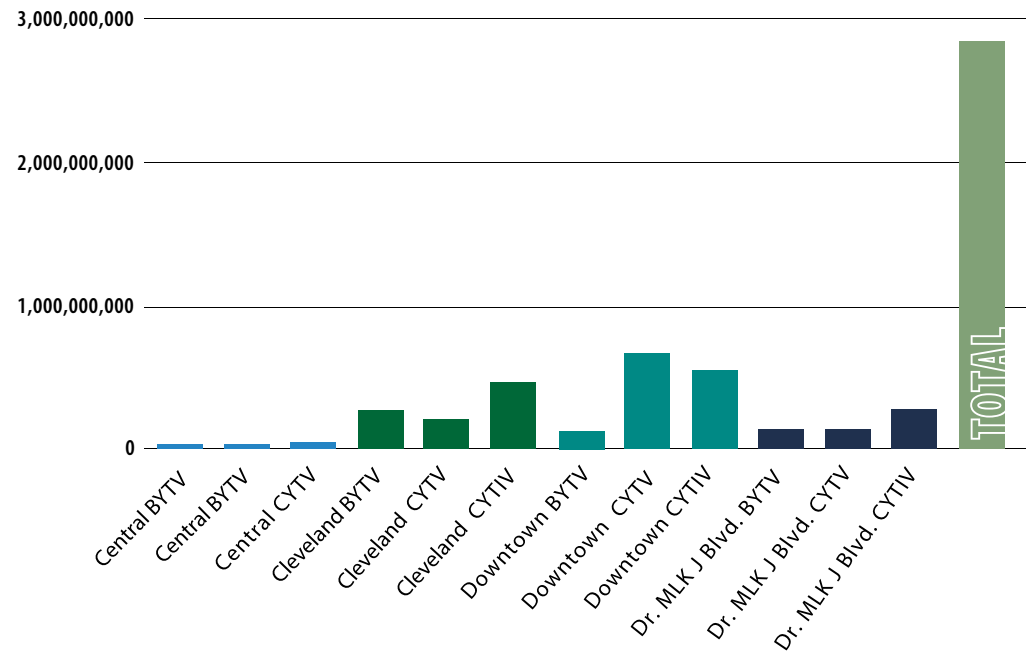
SUMMARY



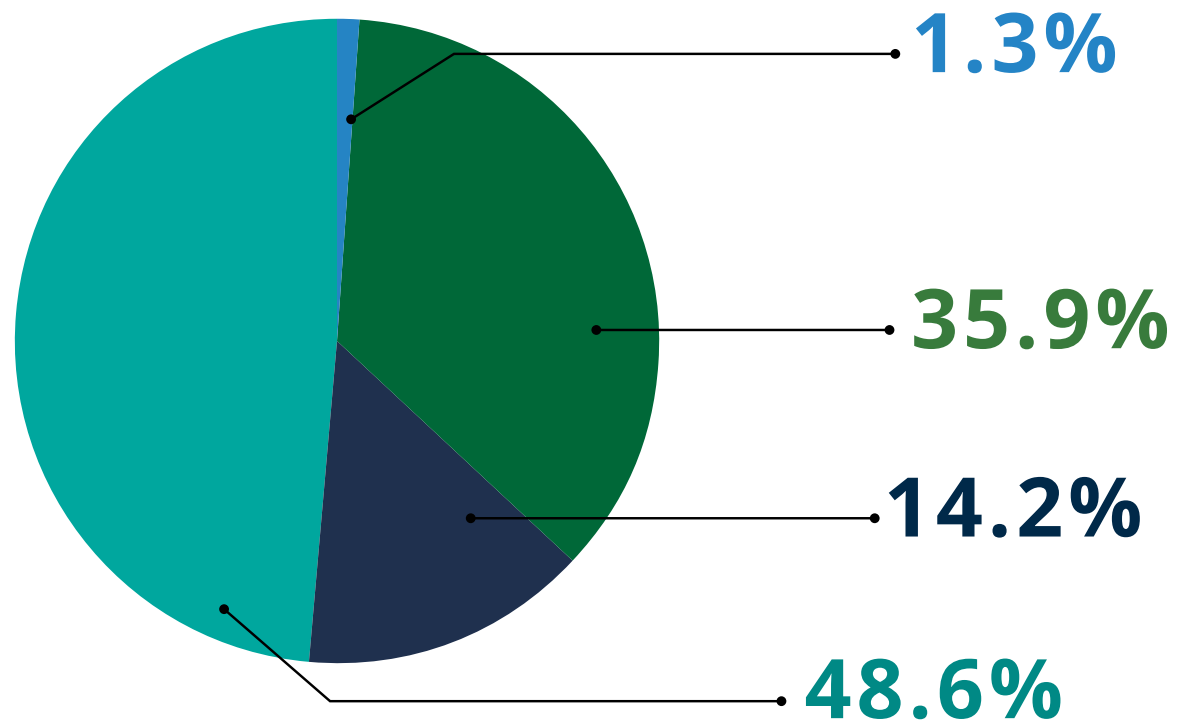
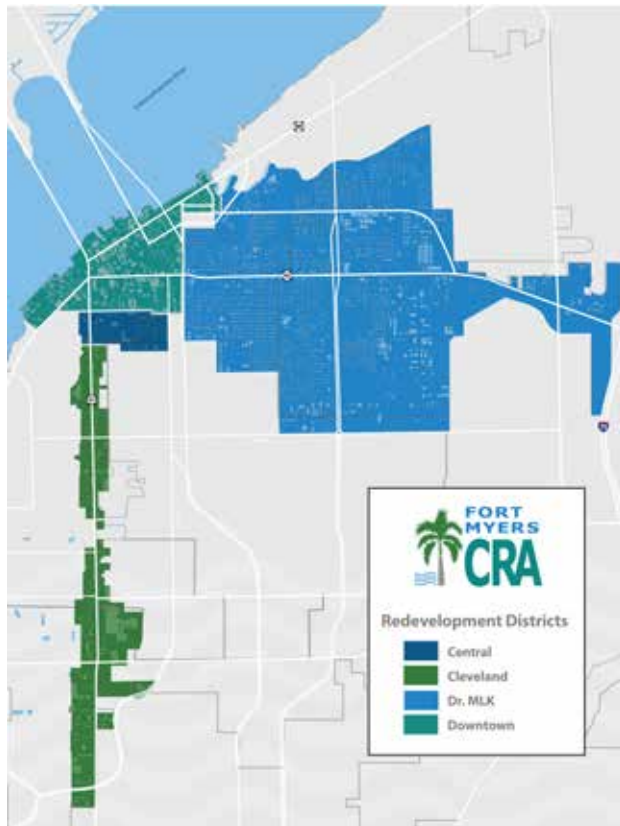
FINANCIALS

ACTIVITIES SUMMARY (\$)

Description by City of Fort Myers CRA Area	Sum of Amount
Central Base year taxable value	\$ 22,542,840
Central Current year tax increment value	\$ 10,379,270
Central Current year taxable value	\$ 32,922,110
Cleveland Base year taxable value	\$ 262,018,560
Cleveland Current year tax increment value	\$ 191,726,946
Cleveland Current year taxable value	\$ 453,745,506
Downtown Base year taxable value	\$ 113,969,750
Downtown Current year taxable value	\$ 663,574,119
Downtown Current year tax increment value	\$ 549,604,369
Dr. MLK Jr. Blvd Base year taxable value	\$ 128,416,351
Dr. MLK Jr. Blvd. Current year tax increment value	\$ 137,910,081
Dr. MLK Jr. Blvd. Current year taxable value	\$ 266,326,429
Grand Total	\$ 2,833,136,331



BUDGETED REVENUE & EXPENDITURES BY AREA



UNDERSTANDING REDEVELOPMENT AND CRAS: A CLOSER LOOK

Q What Exactly is Redevelopment?

A Redefined: Imagine breathing new life into urban spaces – that’s redevelopment for you. It’s the process where public funding revitalizes residential or commercial areas, turning them into vibrant hubs of activity and community.

Q What are CRAs, Like the Fort Myers CRA?

A Illuminated: CRAs stand as catalysts for positive change. Specifically, in places like Fort Myers, they are public agencies dedicated to igniting redevelopment in areas where it’s most needed – based on “Findings of Necessity” as outlined in Part III Chapter 163 of Florida Statutes.

Q The Role of CRAs: What Do They Do?

A Explained: CRAs are not just about beautification; they’re

about transformation. They reshape streetscapes, enhance communities, and foster spaces where public interaction thrives. A significant part of their mission is creating affordable housing and homeownership opportunities, addressing urban challenges like slum and blight in targeted areas. Following the “Findings of Necessity,” they embark on a journey to redefine the identified areas through comprehensive redevelopment plans.

Q CRAs and Funding: The How Decoded:

A The financial backbone of CRAs like the Fort Myers CRA is a unique tool called tax increment financing (TIF). It’s a savvy way to fund redevelopment activities, using increased property values within a redevelopment area to finance improvements. TIF also helps leverage public funds to stimulate private sector activity in these targeted zones.

Q How TIF Rebates Operate Demystified:

A Picture a baseline value of all real property in a redevelopment area, also known as the “frozen value.” Taxing authorities continue to receive property tax revenues based on this value. The exciting part? Any increase in property value, the “increment,” is channeled into the Community Redevelopment Agency Trust Fund, dedicated solely to redevelopment projects within the area. And don’t worry, school board revenues and individual district funds are not impacted by this process. In Florida, the collected increment is sent directly to the CRA trust fund for specific redevelopment purposes, ensuring a focused and effective use of resources.

Q What is Tax Increment Financing?



For More Info: Visit our website at www.fortmyerscra.com to dive deeper into the world of the CRA and see how we’re shaping the future of Fort Myers.

UNDERSTANDING REDEVELOPMENT AND CRAS: A CLOSER LOOK

A Tax Increment Financing (often referred to as “TIF”) is a method to pay for redevelopment of a slum or blighted area through the increased ad valorem tax revenue resulting from that redevelopment. It has been used in many states since the late 1940s and early 1950s to pay for redevelopment projects.

Q What is Increment Rebate (IR)?

A Some general principles that make the IR a win-win for developers, CRAs and the communities they benefit include:

No Up-front Money:

One of the fundamental principles behind IRs is that developers don’t receive money up-front. Instead, they must enter into a development agreement with the local government or the designated Community Redevelopment Agency (CRA).

Developers are not awarded rebates for projects that remain incomplete.

The rebate mechanism operates on a “pay for performance” basis.

Pay Tax First, Then Receive Rebate:

Before a developer or property owner can receive an IR, they must first fulfill their tax obligations. This means that they must pay their tax bill in full before the property is awarded the IR, this is traditionally memorialized in a Development Agreement.

Increment Rebates (IR)s are a powerful incentive for developers to undertake significant redevelopment projects that provide broad community benefits. The process is designed to ensure accountability, performance, and financial prudence. By understanding the nuances of Increment Rebate (IR) disbursement, stakeholders, from developers to taxpayers, can have confidence in the integrity and effectiveness of the system.

In summary, the Increment Rebate program isn’t just about financial

incentives for developers. It’s about creating a symbiotic relationship where developers can benefit when they execute projects that adds value and directly address the needs of the Fort Myers community.

Q What is a Community Redevelopment Area (CRA)?

A In the state of Florida, under the provisions of Chapter 163, Part III, of the Florida Statutes, local governments have the authority to designate specific areas within a city or county as Community Redevelopment Areas (CRAs) when these locales meet certain statutory conditions indicative of underdevelopment. The purpose of a CRA is to revitalize these designated areas through targeted investment and improvement initiatives.

Funding for the activities within a CRA comes from tax increment financing (TIF). This means that a portion of the revenue generated by the increase in property values within





PORT MYERS

UNDERSTANDING REDEVELOPMENT AND CRAS: A CLOSER LOOK

the CRA is reinvested directly back into the same area. Since this funding mechanism relies on locally generated revenue, CRAs operate with a degree of autonomy from the state; however, they are still subject to specific state-imposed requirements to ensure accountability and alignment with broader redevelopment goals.

The concept of CRAs is not unique to Fort Myers. Fort Myers established its Downtown CRA in 1984. The model has been widely adopted across the state. As of now, there are more than 250 CRAs in Florida, each working towards the rejuvenation of its designated areas and the enhancement of the quality of life for its residents.

Q What is a Community Redevelopment Plan?

A A Community Redevelopment Plan is a strategic blueprint that guides the revitalization efforts within a Community Redevelopment Area. Serving as a critical instrument to realize the CRA's vision, it outlines specific goals, project types, and implementation strategies for the designated area, all shaped significantly by community input and participation.

The plan sets forth overarching objectives for the redevelopment area, considering its unique challenges and opportunities. It details the types of projects that will be undertaken to stimulate economic growth, enhance the quality of life, and improve the physical environment.

These might include:
Streetscape enhancements and roadway improvements for better mobility and aesthetics.
Rehabilitation of existing buildings to preserve community character and spur economic activity.

Development of parking solutions, like lots and garages, to accommodate growth and improve accessibility.

Creation and revitalization of neighborhood parks to provide recreational spaces and foster community engagement.

In compliance with Florida law, Chapter 163, Part III, the plan must meet certain criteria to ensure it aligns with state regulations and promotes the public interest. This legal framework ensures that redevelopment efforts are carried out responsibly and transparently, with a focus on long-term sustainability and community benefit.

Q What is a Community Redevelopment Agency?

A Upon a Finding of Necessity as set forth in s. 163.355, and upon a further finding that there is a need for a community redevelopment agency to function in the county or municipality to carry out the community redevelopment purposes of this part, any county or municipality may create a public body corporate and politic to be known as a "community redevelopment agency.

Q What is the Board of Commissioners?

A The resolution declaring the need for a CRA, by ordinance, appoint a board of commissioners of the community redevelopment agency, which shall consist of not fewer than five or more than nine commissioners. In Fort Myers, the City Council members themselves fulfill this role, serving as the CRA Board of Commissioners. This arrangement ensures that the CRA's activities are closely aligned with the city's broader goals and that decision-making is streamlined, promoting a cohesive approach to redevelopment. The CRA Board of Commissioners is responsible for setting policies, approving redevelopment plans, and overseeing projects and initiatives aimed at revitalizing the designated redevelopment area. Through their strategic leadership, CRAs like the one in Fort Myers play a pivotal role in transforming urban landscapes and enhancing the quality of life for residents.



SAFETY



SAFETY INITIATIVES
Kubota - Utility Task Vehicle
[UTVs Meridians]



SAFETY INNOVATION SPOTLIGHT: ENHANCING COMMUNITY WELL-BEING IN FORT MYERS

Strengthening Public Safety with Cutting-Edge Solutions

The Fort Myers Community Redevelopment Agency (CRA) is steadfast in its commitment to ensuring the safety and security of all who live, work, and visit our vibrant city. In line with this commitment, the CRA has proudly supported innovative policing initiatives in partnership with the Fort Myers Police Department (FMPD). In 2022-2023 working together we deployed advanced safety measures that are at the forefront of urban security innovation.

Archer 1200 Vehicle Barriers: A Shield for Our Streets

A notable addition to our safety infrastructure is the Archer 1200 Vehicle Barriers from Meridian Rapid Defense Group. These state-of-the-art barriers represent a significant investment in public safety, offering rapid-deploy protection in our bustling community spaces. Their strategic placement in busy areas is key to mitigating risks during high-traffic events and gatherings, ensuring a secure environment for everyone.

Utility Task Vehicle (UTV): Mobility for Enhanced Safety

Furthering our commitment, the CRA, in partnership with the FMPD, has introduced a new UTV into the heart of downtown Fort Myers. Launched on March 22, 2023, this versatile vehicle is a game-changer for event security and public interaction. It is specifically assigned to patrol the River District during events and concerts, including the monthly Music and Art Walks, Edison Festival of Lights Grand Parade, and other community celebrations. The Utility Task Vehicle (UTV)'s mobility allows officers to navigate through crowds with ease, ensuring safety at every turn. Its presence enhances the FMPD's ability to respond quickly to any situation, while also fostering positive interactions between law enforcement and community members. This initiative not only bolsters security but also enriches the quality of life and experience for residents and visitors alike.



CRA's Commitment to a Safer Fort Myers

These safety innovations are more than just equipment; they are a testament to the CRA's dedication to creating a secure, welcoming environment in Fort Myers. By investing in such advanced safety measures, the CRA underscores its belief that everyone deserves to live, work, and play in a space where safety is a priority. The impact of these initiatives extends beyond the immediate benefits of enhanced security. They contribute to a sense of well-being and confidence among the community, encourage business growth and tourism, and exemplify the CRA's role in nurturing a harmonious and protected urban ecosystem.

**#SafetyUpgrade #FortMyersSafety #CRAValue
#KeepingFortMyersSafe #FortMyersCRA**

SAFETY



BEAUTIFICATION SPOTLIGHT: FIRST STREET PLANTER PROJECT

Revitalizing Downtown: The First Street Planter Project In a collaborative effort to enhance the charm and appeal of the Downtown River District, the Fort Myers Community Redevelopment Agency (CRA) joined hands with Debra Gillen, a dedicated resident of the City of Fort Myers. This partnership, rooted in a shared vision of beautifying the historic downtown area, has led to the successful realization of the First Street Planter Project.

Cultivating Beauty and Community Spirit

Ms. Gillen, who had previously contributed to replacing the planter boxes on First Street, extended her generosity to fund an expansion of this project. Her commitment to the city's beautification resonated with local business owners and community members, sparking a series of collaborative meetings. These discussions culminated in a unified and cohesive aesthetic vision for First Street, turning it into a vibrant and inviting space for residents and visitors alike.

The Value Proposition of Collaborative Urban Enhancement

The First Street Planter Project aligns perfectly with the CRA's mission to foster a visually appealing and lively urban environment. By incorporating greenery and aesthetic elements into the historic brick-lined streets, the project not only enhances the area's visual appeal but also contributes to an improved quality of life. It showcases the potential of public-private partnerships in urban revitalization efforts. Beautifying the historic downtown area, has led to the successful realization of the First Street Planter Project.

Benefits to the Community

The transformation of First Street has brought numerous benefits to the Downtown River District:
Enhanced Street Appeal: The addition of planter boxes has beautified the streetscape, creating a more welcoming and attractive environment.

Increased Foot Traffic: The improved aesthetics have encouraged more visitors and residents to frequent the area, benefiting local businesses.

Community Pride: The project has instilled a sense of pride among residents, fostering a stronger community bond.

Environmental Benefits: The greenery contributes to environmental sustainability and provides a refreshing contrast to the urban setting.



Images@Kinray Moroti

PUBLIC ART SPOTLIGHT: BUCK'S BACKYARD MURAL REVEAL

LOOKING FORWARD: A LEGACY OF BEAUTIFICATION AND COLLABORATION

The success of the First Street Planter Project is a testament to what can be achieved when community members and the CRA work together. It sets a precedent for future collaborative efforts in urban beautification and redevelopment.

As we celebrate this achievement in our annual report, we also look forward to exploring new opportunities for community-driven projects. The CRA remains committed to partnering with residents like Ms. Gillen and local businesses to continue enhancing the beauty and vitality of Fort Myers.

Buck's Backyard Mural Reveal: Celebrating History and Art at McCollum Hall

June 17, 2023, marked a momentous day in the Dunbar community as the Fort Myers Community Redevelopment Agency (CRA) unveiled the completed murals in Buck's Backyard at the historic McCollum Hall. This event was not just a celebration of art; it was a profound homage to the rich cultural heritage that has long been the heartbeat of the area.

A Stroll Down Memory Lane

McCollum Hall, once the pulsating center of music and social gatherings in the 1940s and 50s, witnessed

legendary performances by icons like B.B. King, Louis Armstrong, and Duke Ellington. The bands played in the Art Deco-style building on Martin Luther King Junior Boulevard, with the music-loving crowd often spilling into the adjacent yard, affectionately known as Buck's Backyard, named after businessman Clifford "Buck" McCollum Sr.



Mural Unveiling: A Tribute to Cultural Legacy

The mural reveal event, aligned with local Juneteenth celebrations, offered a vivid visual journey through time. These murals, artistically capturing the essence of McCollum Hall's history, serve as a testament to the music, performances, and community interactions that once echoed within its walls. The artwork resonates with the broader historical narrative, commemorating Juneteenth and the journey towards freedom and equality.

Education, Engagement, and Celebration

This event was more than a mural unveiling; it was an educational and engaging experience for all attendees. The CRA took this opportunity to educate the community about the historical significance of McCollum Hall and the importance of preserving such landmarks. The availability of a Mural Guidebook, offering insights into the artistic process and historical context, further enriched the understanding of participants.



THE VALUE PROPOSITION AND COMMUNITY IMPACT WELL-BEING IN FORT MYERS

Value Proposition:

Connecting Community through Art

The Buck's Backyard Mural Reveal embodies the CRA's commitment to revitalizing community spaces while honoring our rich cultural heritage. By integrating art and history, this event not only beautified the area but also strengthened the community's connection to its past, fostering a sense of pride and belonging.

THIS EVENT OFFERED NUMEROUS BENEFITS TO THE FORT MYERS COMMUNITY:

Cultural Enrichment: The murals serve as a constant reminder of the area's vibrant cultural history.

Community Pride: Residents and visitors alike can take pride in the recognition and celebration of their

community's heritage.

Educational Opportunity:

The event and the guidebook provided educational insights into local history and art.

Inclusive Celebration: Aligning with Juneteenth, the event fostered an inclusive atmosphere, embracing the diverse fabric of the community.

A Step Forward in Community Development

The success of the Buck's Backyard Mural Reveal is a testament to the CRA's vision of a community where history, art, and cultural pride coalesce. As we reflect on this event in our annual report, we are reminded of the power of community collaboration in creating spaces that not only enrich the aesthetic landscape but also deepen our collective understanding of our shared history.

#RedevelopmentWorks

FORT MYERS



THE VALUE PROPOSITION AND COMMUNITY IMPACT WELL-BEING IN FORT MYERS

EMBRACING OUR HERITAGE: THE HEITMAN BUILDING

Reentering the Heitman Building, which opened in 1898 as Lee County's first brick structure and housed the town's first grocery store, was a moment of profound reflection and pride. This building is more than just an office; it's a living piece of Fort Myers' history, embodying the enduring spirit and growth of our community over the years.

Celebrating Our Grand Reopening

The grand reopening was a festive and significant occasion, symbolizing a fresh start in a space where history and future prospects converge. It was an opportunity to acknowledge the hardships we overcame and to celebrate the unyielding support and patience of the Fort Myers community during our time of need.



THE IMPACT ON THE COMMUNITY REOPENING OUR HISTORIC OFFICES HAS BROUGHT NUMEROUS BENEFITS TO THE COMMUNITY:

Renewed Commitment to Redevelopment: Our return signaled a renewed commitment to the ongoing revitalization efforts in Fort Myers.

Continued Community Engagement:

The reopening reinforced our dedication to engaging with and serving the community effectively.

Preservation of Heritage: The restoration of the Heitman Building underscored the importance of preserving historical landmarks in our city.

Looking Ahead with Renewed Vigor

This event in our annual report is not just a recounting of a reopening; it's a narrative of overcoming adversity and looking ahead with renewed vigor. Our historic offices, once again bustling with activity, stand as a beacon of our dedication to fostering the growth and prosperity of Fort Myers.

The CRA is more motivated than ever to continue its mission, drawing strength from our past experiences and the unwavering spirit of our community. Together, we step forward into a future filled with possibilities and optimism.

Looking Forward: Embracing the Future with Optimism.

This grand reopening is a significant milestone in our journey. It's a moment to reflect on the challenges we've overcome and to look forward with optimism. Our revitalized office space stands ready to serve as the epicenter of our continued efforts to foster growth, development, and community engagement in Fort Myers.

We are excited to embark on this new chapter in our historic setting, fueled by the lessons of resilience and community strength that Hurricane Ian taught us. Here's to a future where we continue to build and grow, honoring our past while forging a path towards a vibrant and prosperous future.

Since the establishment of the City of Fort Myers Community Redevelopment Agency (CRA) in 1984, as mandated by [§ 163.356, Fla. Stat.], our focus has been steadfastly set on rejuvenating and enhancing the urban landscape of Fort Myers through a variety of transformative internal projects. These initiatives, encompassing historic preservation, beautification, infrastructure development, and innovative place making, are pivotal in steering our city towards a future marked by growth, inclusivity, and cultural richness.

This section of our report delves into the progress of our ongoing internal projects, each exemplifying the CRA's dynamic approach to urban renewal. Whether it's the restoration of historical sites, the development of landmark gateways, or the creation of engaging public spaces, these projects reflect our commitment to crafting an environment where community spirit flourishes and the heritage of Fort Myers is celebrated and preserved.

COMPREHENSIVE UPDATE ON INTERNAL CRA PROJECTS

1 MCCOLLUM HALL (HISTORIC PRESERVATION/LAND ACQUISITION)

This project exemplifies CRA's commitment to preserving historical heritage while fostering community identity. By navigating property and environmental challenges, we're ensuring that significant landmarks like McCollom Hall continue to enrich our city's cultural landscape.

START DATE: 2008
PRESERVES HISTORICAL HERITAGE AND FOSTERS COMMUNITY IDENTITY.

- **Project Description:** Addressing property owner issues and environmental concerns in preserving a significant historical site.
- **Progress:** Awaiting site permits and Historic Preservation Commission approval as of November 3, 2023.

COMPREHENSIVE UPDATE ON INTERNAL CRA PROJECTS

2 GATEWAY PROJECT (BEAUTIFICATION)

As a symbol of welcome and progress, the Gateway Project stands as a testament to the CRA's dedication to enhancing urban aesthetics and fostering a sense of arrival. This initiative is crucial in creating a positive first impression for residents and visitors alike, underlining our commitment to making Fort Myers a vibrant, inviting city.

START DATE: 2022

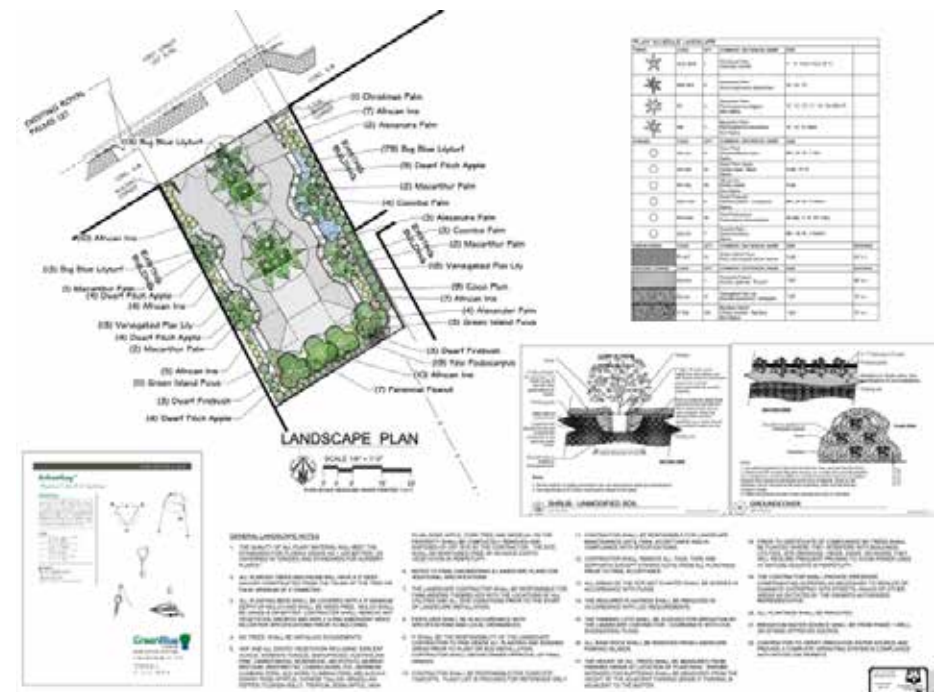
- ENHANCES URBAN AESTHETICS AND FOSTERS A WELCOMING ENVIRONMENT AT THE CITY'S ENTRANCE.
- Project Description: Creating a landmark gateway feature with greenspace and a "welcome" sign.
- Progress: Deed received from FDOT in October 2023; Board of Commissioners acceptance planned for November 29, 2023; pre-application meeting scheduled for December 5, 2023.

3 "COMMON GROUND" POCKET PARK (BEAUTIFICATION)

The "Common Ground" project is a vibrant embodiment of CRA's vision for urban green spaces. By transforming an ordinary space into a multifunctional urban oasis, we're not just beautifying the landscape; we're creating a community hub that fosters social interaction, economic activity, and urban vitality.

START DATE: DECEMBER 14, 2022

- TRANSFORMS URBAN SPACE INTO A MULTIFUNCTIONAL COMMUNITY HUB.
- Project Description: An urban green space initiative featuring vendor spaces, decorative elements, and seating options.
- Progress: Conditional use submitted; permits filed as of October 31, 2023; A2 Group selected, with contractual proceedings scheduled for early 2024.





4 "JOURNEY OF HOPE" SCULPTURE (BEAUTIFICATION)

This project is a striking example of how public art can inspire and uplift communities. Cecilia Lueza's sculpture is more than an artistic centerpiece; it's a beacon of hope and progress, symbolizing our collective aspiration for a future filled with equality and opportunity.

START DATE: JUNE 2021

PUBLIC ART INSPIRING HOPE AND SYMBOLIZING A FUTURE OF EQUALITY.

- Project Description: An 18-20 feet tall sculpture by Cecilia Lueza, located on Martin Luther King Jr. and Veronica S. Shoemaker Boulevards
- Progress: Sculpture parts being welded; plans for foundation base installation underway.

5 DOWNTOWN-CENTRAL PLAN STARTING

This initiative is central to our strategic vision of urban redevelopment. By updating and potentially expanding the Downtown Plan, we're laying the groundwork for sustainable growth and ensuring that the heart of our city reflects the dynamic, inclusive future we envision.

START DATE: AUGUST 2023

LAYS THE GROUNDWORK FOR SUSTAINABLE CONTINUED GROWTH IN DOWNTOWN FORT MYERS.

- Project Description: A statutory update to the Downtown Redevelopment Plan with potential expansion.
- Progress: Initial sessions completed; website kickoff on November 6, 2023; large community meeting planned for January 30, 2024.

COMPREHENSIVE UPDATE ON INTERNAL CRA PROJECTS

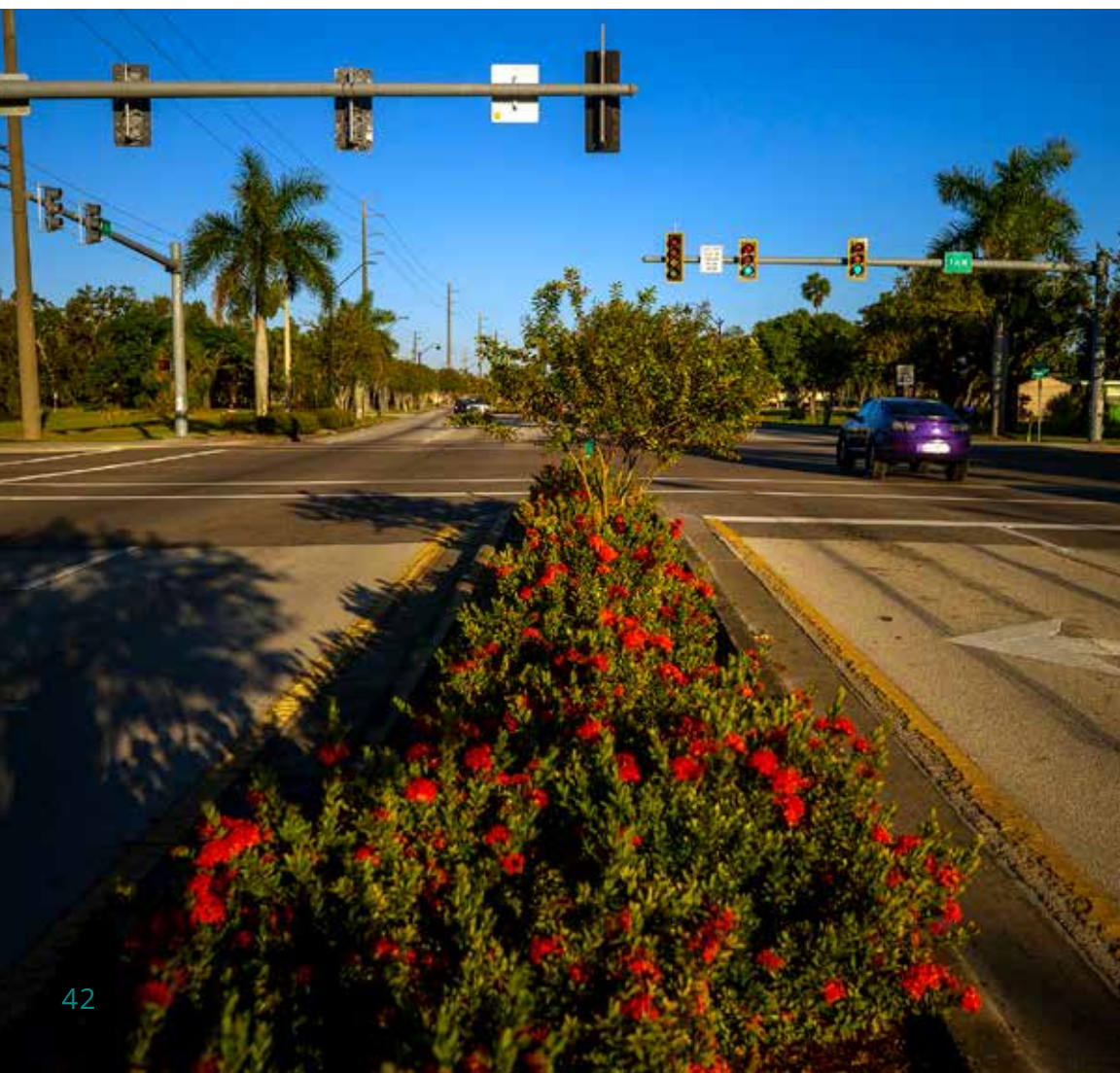
6 MLK & CLEVELAND PLAN UPDATE

The update of these plans underscores our adaptive approach to community development. By continually reassessing and updating our strategies, we ensure that our actions are aligned with the evolving needs and aspirations of the communities we serve, driving equitable and balanced urban growth.

START DATE: NOVEMBER 2023

ENSURES ACTIONS ARE ALIGNED WITH EVOLVING
COMMUNITY NEEDS.

- Project Description: Required updates to the Cleveland Avenue and MLK Redevelopment Plans.
- Progress: Preparations for kickoff; team visits and sessions planned for early January 2024.

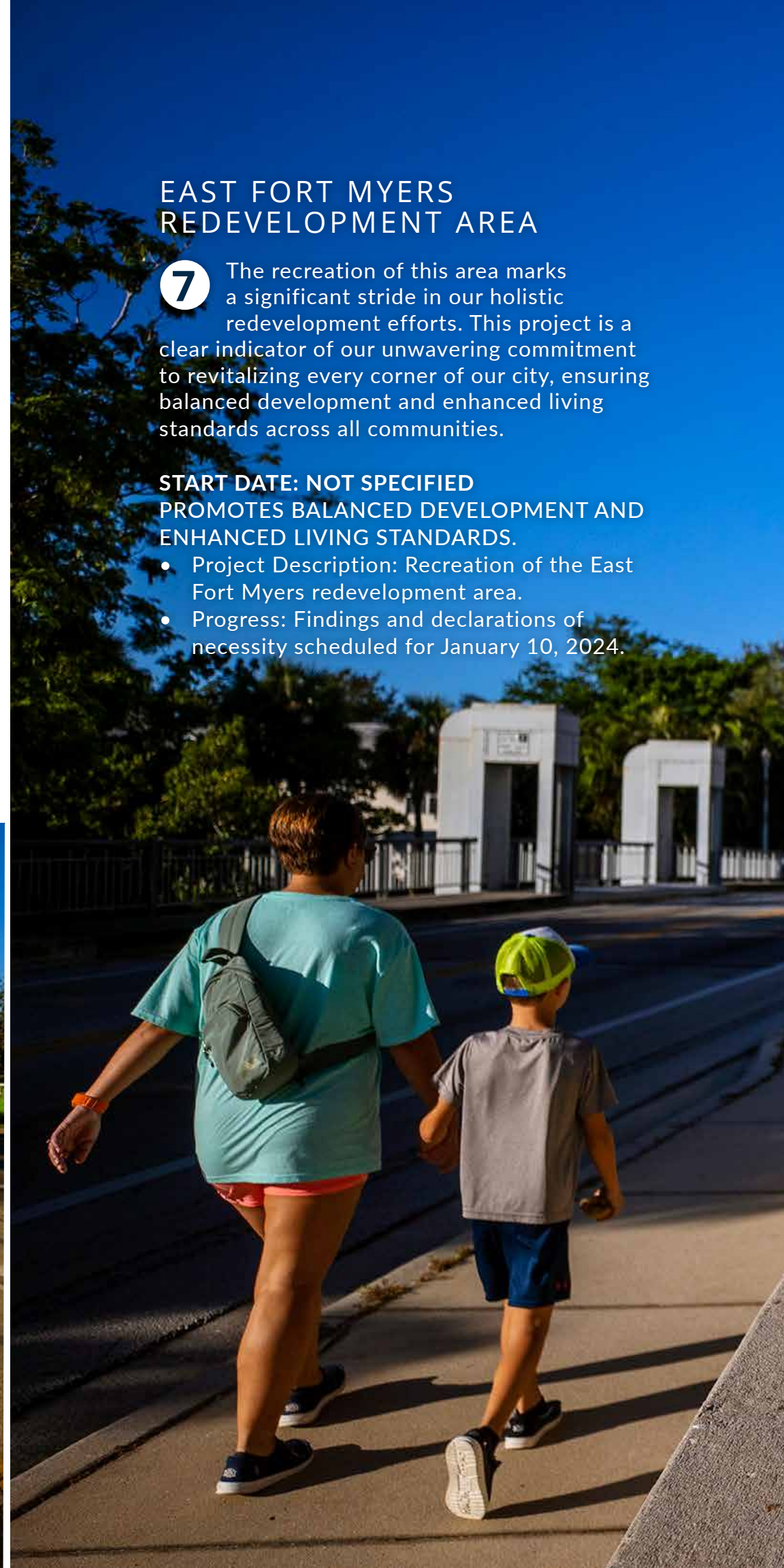


EAST FORT MYERS REDEVELOPMENT AREA

7 The recreation of this area marks a significant stride in our holistic redevelopment efforts. This project is a clear indicator of our unwavering commitment to revitalizing every corner of our city, ensuring balanced development and enhanced living standards across all communities.

START DATE: NOT SPECIFIED
PROMOTES BALANCED DEVELOPMENT AND
ENHANCED LIVING STANDARDS.

- Project Description: Recreation of the East Fort Myers redevelopment area.
- Progress: Findings and declarations of necessity scheduled for January 10, 2024.





CHIEF BILLY BOWLEGS



Billy Bowlegs was a Seminole Indian Chief during the second (1835-1842) and third (1855-1858) Seminole wars. He and his followers resisted their removal to the Indian Territory in Oklahoma until 1858. That year, Bowlegs and about 125 other Seminoles were placed aboard the steamer Gray Cloud for transport across the Gulf to New Orleans and from there up the Mississippi and Arkansas rivers to Fort Gibson, then overland to Wewoka, Oklahoma.

The war later termed the "Billy Bowlegs War" began in 1855 when Bowlegs's gardens of squash and bananas were destroyed by the troops of First Lieutenant George Hartsuff. After his removal to Oklahoma, Bowlegs continued his own war by serving on the Confederate side during the Civil War. He died during the fall or winter of 1863-64, but his name is preserved by his descendents, a town named Bowlegs in Oklahoma, and in the name of Billy's Creek.

CALOOSAHATCHEE CHAPTER NATIONAL SOCIETY DAUGHTERS OF THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION
 BILLY BOWLEGS SOCIETY NATIONAL SOCIETY CHILDREN OF THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION



2022-2023 Annual Report
October 1, 2022 - September 30, 2023