

Panama City Community Redevelopment Agency



The City of Panama City Community Redevelopment Agency Annual Report Fiscal Year 2015





Panama City Community Redevelopment Agency

March 8, 2016

Dear Citizens,

We are very pleased to once again, report on the activities and progress of the Panama City Community Redevelopment Agency (CRA) in FY 2015. The agency is required, by Florida Statutes 163 part III, to issue this Annual Report updating the citizens of the community, and the CRA funding partners, on our progress.

The Mission of the CRA is to remove the damaging influences of slum and blight and begin to change the economic fortunes of distressed areas in the City. This is done by forming plans, in concert with the community, and strategically implementing those plans to improve the economic climate and conditions in various target areas. There are four (4) CRA Districts designated in Panama City. Those areas are Downtown, Downtown North, Millville and St. Andrews. A key aspect of the CRA's focus and mission is to rebuild an environment where new investment can grow and prosper. This will, of course, improve the social and environmental conditions found in the community that will gradually reverse the blighted conditions we see in some portions of our community.

We are truly excited this year, to report significant progress in implementing several CRA projects.

All of these efforts and many more to come will improve the safety, aesthetics, investment climate, and quality of life for the citizens of our great City. I am pleased to provide you with this report so the citizens, and funding partners, can learn more about the outstanding progress being made by the CRA. If you are interested in learning more or volunteering your time, please feel free to contact me, the CRA Office, by calling our offices at 850-215-3869. Thank you for the privilege of serving you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "G Brudnicki".

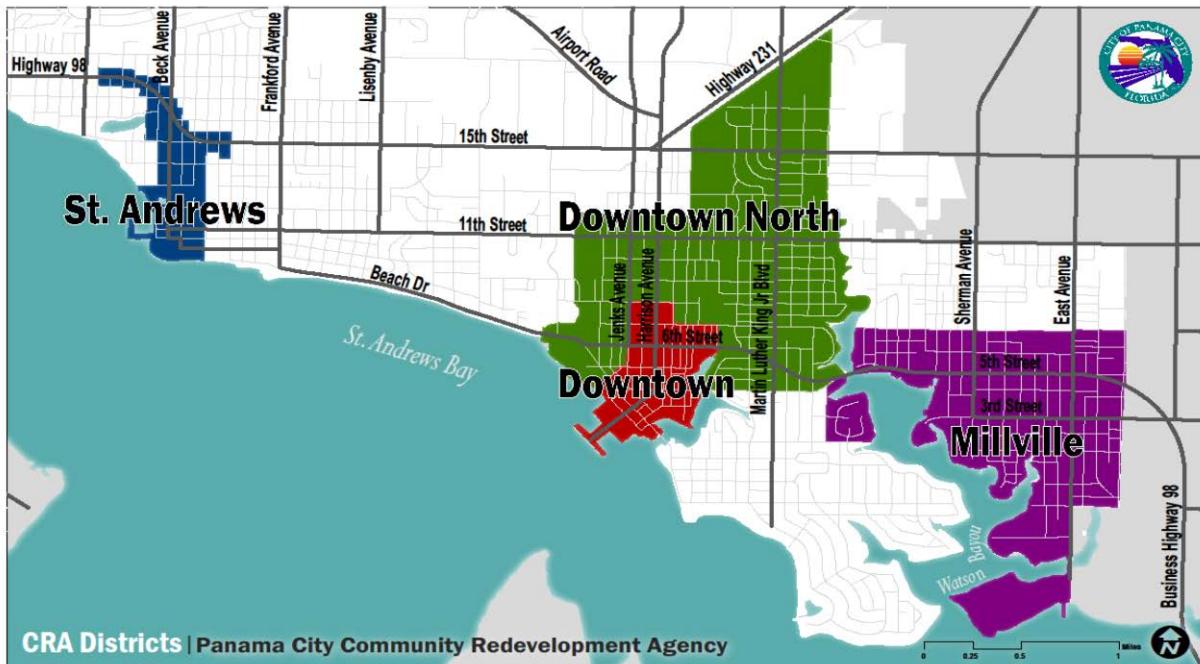
Greg Brudnicki, CRA
Chairman

Panama City Community Redevelopment Agency



Introduction

The Panama City Community Redevelopment Agency (CRA) has four (4) Districts. Which consist of the Downtown created in 1984, St. Andrews created in 1989, Downtown North created in 1993 and Millville created in 2004.



CRA Financial Information FY 2015

CRA District	Assets	Liabilities	Revenues	Expenses
Downtown	\$188,249	\$3,893	\$266,695	\$290,294
Downtown North	\$1,939,276	\$8,023	\$1,380,203	\$823,379
St. Andrews	\$156,484	\$12,125	\$414,719	\$410,754
Millville	\$4,290	\$2,951	\$271,599	\$153,827
Total	\$2,228,229	\$26,992	\$2,333,213	\$1,678,254

*Note: All financial information was provided through a preliminary audit report from Tipton, Marler, Garner & Chastain CPA firm.



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Downtown District

The Downtown District has been working with business owners and the Downtown Improvement Board to support revitalization of the community. Many public improvement projects have been performed in 2015 with a number of grants awarded to improve facades in the business district. CRA staff worked with the Public Works Department to issue an RFQ for the Harrison Ave. Streetscape Project Design and began preparing information to gather public input. The Downtown CRA has also continued to support the Community Policing MOU with the City of Panama City Police Department by contributing \$52,000 to the efforts. Downtown CRA also supports Police Substation in the District by being financially responsible for the rent and utilities of the building. This MOU involves three of the four districts including the Downtown, Downtown North, and St. Andrews CRA's. This past year it produced, in the Downtown District, 326 Police reports. Community Policing along with Code Enforcement has begun to improve the safety and environment of Downtown. The CRA has contributed to cooperative partnerships to improve economic development by supporting the Boat Parade of Lights, Dickens of a Christmas, as well as other events.

Improvements to Gateway Park

In late October 2014, the Downtown CRA hired a contractor to pressure wash all the brick pavers and brick walls in the Gateway Park. The cleaning of the brick in the park was long overdue. After the pressure washing the park looks brighter and more vibrant. Here are some images of the brick before and after the pressure washing.



Pavers on Harrison Avenue

Several trees along the Harrison Ave. corridor were diseased or dying and had to be removed, which lead to tripping hazards on the sidewalks. The CRA had the stumps of the trees ground down and pavers were laid over them. The irrigation was plugged and prepared for installation of trees at a later date.

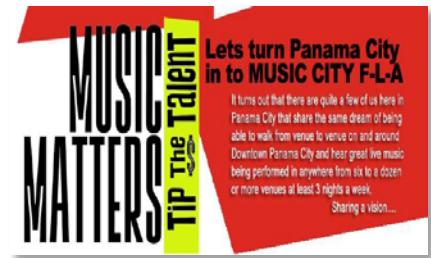


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Music Matters

Music Matters is an initiative conceived by local residents and business owners for the sole purpose of offering the community an opportunity to participate in the continued revitalization and improvement of Downtown Panama City by providing expanded opportunities to enjoy food, drinks and live entertainment along Harrison Avenue that have not previously existed. A significant hurdle for local businesses comes in the form of yearly licensing fees from the international performance of music for the benefit of publishers and songwriters. Music Matters assists businesses in Downtown Panama City by reimbursing up to 80% of the licensing fees to assist in providing these expanded entertainment opportunities. During FY '14-15 four businesses along Harrison Ave participated in this initiative.



Benches on Harrison Ave

Twelve of the benches along Harrison Ave. between 6th St. & Government were repaired in May. Many of the benches had missing, cracked, or broken slats. New slats were installed and now offer a much needed facelift to benches along Harrison Ave.



Downtown Financials

Downtown CRA Revenue		
County TIF	City TIF	Carry Forward
\$147,182	\$119,513	\$213,211



Downtown CRA Expenses		
Personnel	Operating	Cap Improv.
\$51,231	\$222,573	\$16,490

Assistance Grants Awarded

Commercial Assistance 50/50 Grants

- \$74,011.76

Dickens of a Christmas Sponsorship awarded to the DIB

- \$12,900.00

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Downtown North District

Alley Crew makes a difference



The Downtown North CRA encompasses nearly two square miles of land area, which includes but is not limited to the Greater Glenwood area, Jenks Professional Corridor, the Bay Medical/ Sacred Heart Center, and portions of Downtown.

The Downtown North Community Redevelopment Plan references community clean-up in several places including Housing, Land Use, Neighborhood Character and Identity; to stress the need for the CRA, City Departments, and the community to identify sites in neighborhoods that have a detrimental impact on the investment image. Additionally, the plan speaks to the participation from faith-based organizations to aid in obtaining community-wide support, addressing needs such as organizing neighborhood clean-up drives.

Alleyways have also been identified for clean up as they can attract criminal activities and greatly reduce the size of the homeowners backyard. As well, they are often poorly maintained, unsightly, cluttered with debris and inconvenient; as a result many residents park their vehicles on the street, thereby creating traffic congestion.

The Downtown North CRA staff has implemented a program with a focus on clearing alleyways within its boundaries.

What are the program goals?

1. To keep Downtown North CRA clean.
2. To create a clear sight line within the alley ways.

How is it implemented?

The Downtown North has a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Public Works Department to clean alley ways within the Downtown North CRA. This provides a clear sight line for neighbors as well as improves visibility for law enforcement. One added benefit of this service is the provision for three (3) temporary positions. Public Works provides a truck for transportation and a staff position for day to day supervision. We are in the fourth year of this program and the community has greatly benefitted.



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Community Engagement

The City of Panama City Downtown North CRA District contracted with Career Source Gulf Coast for the fourth time to help support the community engagement program. Career Source Gulf Coast conducted a competitive bid process to find an individual or company to assist in this work. Carpe Diem Community Solutions (CDCS), a local minority (MBE) and disadvantaged business (DBE) won the bid again.

During the project, observable improvements to the Glenwood neighborhood increased community pride and strengthened community engagement. CDCS developed a flyer and press release to promote two community-wide forums. The forum topics were getting to know your neighbors and hurricane preparedness. A number of representatives from different City Departments and outside organizations attended as guest speakers. Two Downtown North CRA boundary area residents, who are physically unable and/or lacking the financial resources for yard maintenance, benefited from the project's yard cleaning events. Adults from the Community Improvement Program and the Career Source Gulf Coast Striving toward Achieving Real Success (STARS) youth program from Bay and Rutherford High Schools volunteered during each clean-up, helping to build community pride.

Activities completed during October 2014 - September 2015:

1. Created and delivered workshops on blight and adverse environmental conditions.

- CDCS developed and distributed flyers to promote monthly Community Improvement meetings.
- Established vision statement:



STARS Youth Program members



The vision of the Downtown North CRA Community Improvement committee is to provide community cooperation, a sense of well-being, and neighborhood pride through:

- *Promoting the general welfare of residents and their quality of life by solving issues related to a healthy, safe, and secure environment;*
- *Encouraging neighborhood projects and harmony among residents, where neighbors know each other and feel safe walking, riding a bicycle, and driving a licensed vehicle in public spaces.*



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- Mission statement established:

The mission of the Downtown North CRA Community Improvement organization is to support the improvement of the neighborhood by educating residents about the many issues affecting them, their neighbors, and their children. The mission also includes the improvement of living conditions of underprivileged children, low to moderate income people, the elderly, and adults and children with special needs.

- CDCS facilitated a two hour Meet & Greet community-wide forum on March 14, 2015.

23 individuals attended

Guest speakers included:

Downtown North Community Redevelopment Agency

City of Panama City Community Policing

LEAD Coalition BASIC

Community Improvement Committee

- CDCS facilitated a three hour Hurricane Preparedness community-wide forum on July 13, 2015. 17 individuals attended.

Guest speakers included:

WMBB Channel 13

Bay County Emergency Management Office

Bay County Health Department

Bay County Red Cross

Blackwell Insurance Company



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Community Policing Innovation

In the Downtown North District, officers focus on complaints from citizens regarding random and targeted violence, drug activity and its associated blight, firearm crimes, street level robberies and prostitution. One officer serves as a liaison who will assist businesses and residents in forming community watches to facilitate crime prevention and three officers function as a crime prevention unit to address the crime related issues. This will enable the City to focus specifically on the issues which are creating blight for this district, as well as focus the liaison to address the environmental concerns which enable these types of activities to flourish.

Officers continue to work with code enforcement regarding boarded up houses and businesses and other forms of environmental blight which can lead to criminal activity. Downtown North Community Policing innovation has added much protection to the district and Policing efforts in the Downtown North received 1020 total calls for service generating 178 police reports.

Residential Improvement Assistance

The Downtown North CRA District partners with the City of Panama City Community Development Department to provide Residential Improvement Assistance to those individuals who cannot financially afford to participate in the current Residential Grant program. The Downtown North Plan states that Residential use constitutes the largest component of the existing land use in the redevelopment area, accounting for approximately 305 acres or 35.6% of the total development land area. There are 1,336 single family housing units in the redevelopment area accounting for 97.3% of the total parcels under residential uses. The remaining 37 parcels or 2.7%, of the total parcels are multifamily units including apartment and duplexes. A committee of community resources has been formed to address the needs of those individuals. Funds are used for exterior renovations and matched with funds from Community Development in addition to assistance provided by other agencies.

Downtown North Financials

Matching Assistance Grants Awarded

Commercial Assistance 50/50 Grants

- \$31,447.91

Residential Assistance 50/50 Grants

- \$14,224.22

Downtown North CRA Revenue

County TIF	City TIF	Carry Forward
\$763,348	\$616,854	\$1,220,541

Downtown North CRA Expenses

Personnel	Operating	Cap Improv.
\$95,277	\$641,332	\$86,770



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St. Andrews District

Bayview Ave. Parking Lot improvement of dumpster pad:

Improvement of dumpster pad project included relocation of four dumpers to the city owned parking lot on Bayview Ave. Relocation of these allowed for additional availability of four parking spaces. Removal of three palm trees and installation of protective bollards, vinyl fencing and a heavy duty concrete pad completed this project



Bayview Ave. Parking Lot Improvements:

Heavy use of the public parking lot on Bayview Ave. resulted in an uneven and deteriorating drive surface. The CRA staff coordinated with the Public Works Department to build a new and more durable driveway surface



Beck Ave. Lighting Improvement:

After seeing a need for increased lighting through the commercial corridor CRA staff coordinated with Public Works to bid out this project. Additional lighting along Beck Ave. was completed in January. This included replacement of several poles, additional fixtures, and replacement of all light bulbs with LED lights.



CRA Storage Building:

The district has seen a growth in tourism and local traffic while the need for maintenance of the district has grown. Construction of a storage building was a necessity to continue maintaining the district to current standards. The storage building will serve as a garage for an electric maintenance vehicle. Additionally, the design of the storage building is intended to serve as an example of design, construction materials, and aesthetic standards for the community.



Museum Signage:

A need for better identification of the Print Museum was addressed in additional signage. This adhesive signage allowed CRA staff to preserve the historic construction of the building and allows for easy removal.



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St. Andrews Community Policing

The St. Andrews CRA contribution to the Community Policing MOU is \$56,076.00, and through these efforts 34 police reports were generated. To enhance community engagement periodic Cops & Coffee meetings were held with local business owners.

Events & Sponsorships

Sponsorships:

- Historic St. Andrews Waterfront Partnership: \$24,000.⁰⁰
- St. Andrews CRA renewal of annual service agreement which provides for the operation and maintenance of the Print Museum. This includes keeping the museum open to the public, performing walking tours, maintaining a volunteer base, newsletters, social media, grant writing, and operation of historic printing presses.
- Over 2500 – Museum Visitors
- Over 700 – People toured on Historic Walking Tours
- The Friends of Governor Stone: \$5,000.⁰⁰
- Crew of St. Andrews Mardi Gras: \$3000.⁰⁰
- Gulf Jazz Society - Jazz Festival: \$2000.⁰⁰

Events:

- Christmas in the Park & Christmas Tree Lighting
- Panama City Boat Parade of Lights

St Andrews Financials:

Matching Assistance Grants Awarded

Commercial Assistance 50/50 Grants

- 19,950.70

St. Andrews CRA Revenue

County TIF	City TIF	Carry Forward
\$230,958	\$183,791	\$155,614

St. Andrews CRA Expenses

Personnel	Operating	Cap Improv.
\$93,277	\$205,487	\$111,911

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Millville Annual Report

Planters for Downtown Millville

The Millville CRA completed a MOU with the Millville Community Alliance (MCA) for the purchase and maintenance for planters to be placed out in front of the businesses on 3rd St. The Millville CRA had planned to partner with Margaret K. Lewis School to help maintain the planters, but things didn't work out. Ultimately the Millville CRA took over the responsibility of the planters, in replanting them.



Derelict Vessels in Watson Bayou



The Millville CRA contacted the Florida Wildlife Commission (FWC) to inquire about partnering with them to rid Watson Bayou of the derelict vessels in. There is a grant available to help remove derelict vessels; the process, however, takes over a year before funds are awarded. CRA staff spoke with FWC staff Phil Horning who then contacted FWC Officer Drew Nelson. On October 28, 2014, Officer Nelson escorted CRA staff on a ride-along to identify the derelict vessels in the Watson Bayou. There were three vessels that staff focused on removing; any money used to dispose of these vessels was eligible to be reimbursed by the FWC grant. There are several more that Officer Nelson said were at risk, but had not yet fit the criteria to be deemed a derelict vessel. Officer Nelson forwarded the three cases of derelict vessels to staff. The Millville CRA made plans to work with the parties and offer a grant matching of up to 50% to see if this incentive would help get the boats removed. In one of the derelict cases the owner acknowledged that he had indeed abandoned the boat and had no intentions of removing it. The Millville CRA followed procedure outlined by the FWC to remove the boat. This boat was successfully removed April 24, 2015. Several derelict vessels that were identified in Watson Bayou during the ride-along in November have been removed, with the assistance of CRA staff.



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Clearing of Vacant Parcels

The Millville CRA announced the launch of a program first implemented in the Downtown North to control some of the slum and blight in the Millville Community. The clearing of vacant parcels would not only make the neighborhoods safer but hopefully make people take more pride in their neighborhood. Staff sent out 31 letters to owners of the vacant/abandoned parcels. Those letters described the program as a onetime clean-up of the yard with the owners' permission. CRA also reached out to property owners once a month throughout the Millville area. The letter gave the owners 30 days to respond and sign the permission form. The Millville CRA announced in February 2015, that the first rounds of parcels had been cleared. The entire corner of Maple Ave. and 6th St was cleared of all debris and overgrowth. The owners of the parcel located at Elm Ave. and 6th St. saw the work being done and had their parcel cleared as well. This program alleviated quite a bit of slum and blight in the Millville area and increased visibility on the block.

Corner of Maple and 6th St.



Parcel on Elm Ave. & 6th St.





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Tyndall Volunteer Project

2816 E. 3rd St. Mr. Bob Meyers

Officer Bryan Freeman brought the ramp issue to the attention of CRA Staff back in April 2015 for the home of Mr. Bob Meyers a retired veteran. Staff coordinated with volunteers from Tyndall Air Force Base to have a new ramp built. The supplies were purchased by the Millville CRA and the Tyndall volunteers completed the ramp. Unfortunately, on the day the new ramp was installed Mr. Meyers suffered a stroke and was in the hospital but received heartwarming surprise when he came home. As you can see the new ramp has hand rails to assist him in walking up and down the ramp.



Millville Financials

Matching Assistance Improvement Grants

Commercial 50/50 grants

- \$25,500

Residential 50/50 grants

- \$9,118.17

Millville CRA Revenue

County TIF	City TIF	Carry Forward
\$150,572	\$121,026	\$48,655

Millville CRA Expenses

Personnel	Operating	Debt
\$58,451	\$95,376	\$157,989

Panama City Community Redevelopment Agency



FY 2015 CRA Board Members

Greg Brudnicki – Chairman

John Kady

Kenneth Brown – Pro Tempore

Billy Rader

Mike Nichols

Contact information

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Onya Bates	Millville Program Manager	215-3873
Jared Jones	St. Andrews Program Manager	215-3870
Toni Shamplain	Downtown North Program Manager	215-3872
Shelley Allen	CRA Administrative Assistant	215-3869
Melvin Benton	Grants and Operations Coordinator	215-3837

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See Our Website at <http://pcgov.org/163/Community-Redevelopment-Agency>