



MEETING MINUTES

Lealman Community Redevelopment Area Advisory Committee Meeting Wednesday, February 26, 2025, 6 PM

Committee Members Present In-person: Jeremy Heath, Kim Blessinger, Jennifer Post, Charles Flynt, Kenneth Williams, Tony Coryn, Tyler Payne

Committee Members Absent: Dominic Howarth

Pinellas County Staff Present: Amy Davis, Felix Nunez, Cameron Ehmig, Scott Swearengen, Bruce Bussey, Jason Ester (Virtually)

I. Call to Order

Chair Charles Flynt called the meeting to order at 6:00 PM.

II. Introductions

The Advisory Committee completed introductions. New Advisory Committee Member Tyler Payne was introduced to the committee. New employee CRA Specialist Cameron Ehmig was also introduced to the Committee.

III. Citizen Input

Lealman Citizen, Mr. David Lee, highlighted the diverse group of stakeholders involved and expressed optimism about leveraging a significant budget for community improvements. He specifically noted enthusiasm for the recent Habitat for Humanity proposal. He urged that as the County allocates large sums for infrastructure projects and affordable housing, it also focus on putting more of that money directly into the hands of current residents. While supporting homeownership as a pathway to strengthening the community, Mr. Lee also raises the concern that some funds may be allocated to families who do not already reside in the area. Overall, he looks forward to continued progress and collaboration in the coming year.

IV. Approval of Minutes

The committee reviewed the minutes from the November 20, 2024 meeting. Members confirmed that no amendments were needed and subsequently approved them unanimously, affirming the accuracy of the recorded proceedings.

V. Election of Chair and Vice Chair for 2025

Advisory Committee members voted on the Chair and Vice-Chair for 2025. Kim

Blessinger and Jennifer Post were nominated for the Chair. By a vote of 4 to 2, Kim Blessinger was elected Chair for 2025.

Jennifer Post was nominated for Vice Chair and was unanimously elected for Vice-Chair for 2025.

VI. Lealman CRA Agenda Items

- **Distribution of the 2025 official meeting schedule:** Committee members were presented with the year's calendar, which includes monthly meetings from January to June and semi-monthly meetings for the rest of the year, with tentative meetings scheduled for July, September, and November. There is also an opportunity to call meetings on the tentative meeting months if needed.
- **Lealman Heights update:** Pinellas County purchased a cluster of properties in the vicinity of 40th Street, between 56th and 58th Avenues, several years ago, to create a redevelopment opportunity. The county preserved as many existing units as possible as rental housing managed by the Pinellas County Housing Authority. Some uninhabitable structures were demolished.

A prior developer was unable to move forward with their proposed development, prompting the county to issue a new Request for Proposals (RFP) for an affordable home development. Of the five submissions, Habitat for Humanity's plan was ranked the highest. Their proposal includes:

- **Townhomes:** Located in the northwest corner, Habitat will construct 26 two-story townhome units.
- **Single-Family Homes:** The remaining parcels will be redeveloped into 31 single-family homes.

Under the arrangement, the land remains in a land trust while homeowners purchase the structures and sign a long-term ground lease, making homes more affordable at 80% to 120% of the Area's Median Income. The project will unfold in phases, with vacant lots and storm-damaged structures being developed first, followed by the development of the remaining units. The townhome portion requires additional design and engineering, estimated at up to three years to complete. Habitat intends to collaborate with current tenants and the broader community to make its homeownership program more accessible to a wider audience.

- **Joe's Creek Industrial Park Master Plan Update:**

Kimley-Horn provided an update on the Joe's Creek Industrial Park Master Plan, which evaluates existing conditions, infrastructure requirements, and

potential land uses that could be considered within the industrial park/targeted employment study area. The presentation covered the following key points:

Study Area and Purpose

The plan's overall goal is to guide future land use and zoning decisions, considering the area's role as a Target Employment Center and addressing aging infrastructure.

The corridor is largely industrial, with several small or underutilized parcels, significant flood-risk areas, and aging utility systems.

Real Estate Market Analysis

Strong demand was identified for industrial and flexible-use spaces, given the area's accessibility and existing building stock.

Limited potential exists for office, market-rate multifamily, or large-scale retail; however, small-format retail or service uses could succeed, especially if they cater to local employees and residents.

Infrastructure Overview

Much of the sanitary sewer and stormwater infrastructure dates back to the 1950s and 1960s and will need substantial upgrades.

Joe's Creek itself poses flood-risk challenges for redevelopment; the area also faces evolving standards for flood mitigation and stormwater management.

Any addition of residential or mixed-use developments would likely require enhanced systems, such as capacity upgrades, improved roadways, and better pedestrian amenities.

Possible Development Scenario Range

Preservation: Maintain the current industrial character with minimal changes.

Enhancement: Focus on infrastructure upgrades to attract higher-quality industrial tenants and encourage reinvestment in existing buildings.

Hybrid: Allow limited new uses (e.g., small-scale retail, workforce housing) in select locations, accompanied by moderate infrastructure improvements.

Full Mixed-Use: Support substantial rezoning and redevelopment for a broader range of uses, requiring extensive infrastructure upgrades and potentially higher displacement of current uses.

Future Transit and Public Access

The adjacent rail corridor has the potential for a pedestrian trail or, in the long term, public transit service.

Because the area lies between major hubs, it is recognized in countywide planning as a future transit corridor zone, which could support higher densities and mixed-use development over time.

Next Steps

A detailed cost analysis of infrastructure improvements will be conducted to understand the financial implications of each scenario better.

Recommendations will be finalized later in the year, including potential changes to land use designations, zoning regulations, and capital improvements.

Ongoing outreach and stakeholder engagement will continue to present a finalized master plan to county officials for consideration.

The presentation highlighted the balance between preserving existing industrial strengths and exploring limited mixed-use opportunities. Emphasis was placed on coordinating infrastructure upgrades, economic feasibility, and long-term policy objectives to create a clear roadmap for the area's future.

- **FY26 Budget Priorities – Discussion**

Summary of the FY26 Budget Priorities Discussion

The preliminary FY26 budget priorities for the Lealman CRA Trust Fund were presented, outlining the proposed expenditures and revenue streams that will undergo departmental and administrative review before submission to the County Commission as a proposed budget. The budget is structured around both MSTU (Municipal Services Taxing Unit) and countywide millage TIF revenues, ensuring compliance with state statutes, the CRA Plan, and County policies.

New or Expanded Initiatives

CRA Plan Update/Professional Services/Studies (\$430,000):

- Funds a comprehensive rewrite of the CRA Plan, with no major update updated since adopted and prepares the CRA for its midterm review, a key milestone for the 30-year district, along with specialized consulting for economic impact analyses, policy development, and targeted studies (e.g., on alleyways or mobile home parks).

Land Acquisition, Clearing, and Site Prep/Cleanup (\$2,000,000):

- Allocates funds for purchasing and preparing strategic parcels for redevelopment, including necessary environmental assessments or minor mitigation work.

Infrastructure Improvements (Implementing the JCIP Master Plan) (\$7,500,000):

- The single largest expenditure line item supports major upgrades to stormwater, sewer systems, and roads, advancing the redevelopment of the industrial area.

Linking Lealman Projects (Mobility Initiatives) (\$500,000):

- Replaces the previous “Sidewalk Program” with an immediate focus on installing sidewalks in high-need areas, especially near schools and major corridors, to enhance pedestrian safety and connectivity.

Lealman Park Improvements (\$310,000):

- Funds design and construction of low-maintenance amenities aimed at improving community park usage.

ADU Grants (\$100,000):

- A pilot program to increase affordable housing through accessory dwelling units.

Path Forward and Next Steps

Refining the Budget:

- The fund balance and revenue estimates will be updated as more accurate property value data becomes available in June.
- Staff will finalize the budget request, incorporating feedback on initiatives such as ADU grants, alleyway connectivity, mobile home park research, and sidewalk improvements.

- The CRA Advisory Committee and staff will continue discussing new initiatives and refine the allocation of funds, ensuring that public outreach and stakeholder input shape the final budget priorities.

Additional Lealman CRA and Non-CRA Updates by Amy Davis

Mural/Public Art Projects: Felix Nunez announced that the committee reviewing artwork for the signal boxes will meet next week to select the artwork for the signal boxes. He also announced that the sites for the two mural projects had been finalized. Sammy's Seafood in Joe's Creek and the commercial space on the Corner of 54th Avenue and 28th Street will be the sites of the next two murals, and the mural selection process is underway. Once finalists have been selected by the panel, which includes Dominic Howarth of the Advisory Committee, Murals should be underway by late May, with a completion date in June.

Land Acquisition Policy: Amy Davis is developing a new land acquisition policy to clearly define the types of properties the CRA will target for purchase and the purposes for which they will be used. This policy will be presented at an upcoming meeting for advisor input, as one does not currently exist.

Property Status and Environmental Review: The previously discussed non-conforming property had preliminary research that suggests potential environmental concerns, prompting a request for an environmental review to assess its viability.

Mohr Avenue House: Habitat for Humanity successfully purchased the property at the tax fee sale in December. They will be constructing two single-family homes on this property.

Culvert Funding and Infrastructure Projects: An update was provided on the major culvert project, pending the identification of funding for \$15.5 million. Appropriations have been requested from both the House and Senate this year.

Additionally, the Joe's Creek infrastructure contract amendment is on track to be presented before the Board of County Commissioners on March 25, which will expand the scope and timeline for improvements.

Crown Auto: Crown is progressing with plans to redevelop the two sites located on either side of 54th Street and the west side of 34th Street.

Amy Davis also provided several community and Non-CRA updates.

VII. Advisory Committee Member Comments

During the advisory committee member comments section, a committee member raised concerns about a news story in which another CRA committee member



spoke on behalf of the entire committee without providing complete context in their statements. They requested that he disclose full information in his interviews and clearly state that his personal opinions do not represent the committee's views in compliance with the committee bylaws.

VIII. Adjourn

Kim Blessinger moved to adjourn the meeting. Jeremy Heath seconded. The meeting adjourned at 8:45 PM.