



## MEETING MINUTES

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

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

**Committee Members Absent:** Kenneth Williams

**Pinellas County Staff Present:** Amy Davis, Felix Nunez, Cameron Ehmig, Jason Ester

#### I. Call to Order

Chair Kim Blessinger called the meeting to order at 6:00 PM.

#### II. Introductions

The Advisory Committee members and Pinellas County staff introduced themselves, and new attendees and partners were welcomed.

#### III. Citizen Input

Greg Shaeffer, Interim CEO of the Florida Dream Center, provided remarks thanking the Committee and County for their continued support. He spoke about the organization's mission to address community needs arising from various forms of poverty, such as disconnection from faith, community, or purpose. He emphasized that while the organization has volunteers and operational infrastructure, it is currently facing a funding gap specifically related to food delivery and mobile debris cleanup. He requested support for expenses such as fuel, insurance, and access to mobile dumpsters.

David Lee, a resident of the CRA, offered public input in support of Senate Bill 184 (Accessory Dwelling Unit legislation) and expressed enthusiasm for the CRA's land purchase initiative. He noted that while the draft FY26 budget includes funding to support this initiative, he hopes it remains focused on redevelopment and does not shift toward funding stormwater or other infrastructure functions from acquired property parcels.

#### **IV. Approval of Minutes**

The Committee reviewed the meeting minutes from February 26, 2025. Tyler Payne moved to approve the minutes. Jeremy Heath seconded. The motion was unanimously approved.

#### **V. Lealman CRA Agenda Items**

##### **CRA Plan Update Discussion**

Amy Davis initiated a discussion about the CRA Plan update, noting the importance of a comprehensive revision. Although minor adjustments have been made over the years (such as financial projections), the current plan, adopted in 2016, has not undergone a meaningful update.

She explained that the plan should be revisited every five to seven years to remain relevant and effective. The update will:

- Align the plan with current Florida statutes
- Address outdated or ineligible funding categories
- Develop focused strategies for redevelopment and economic development
- Simplify repetitive or unclear elements
- Prepare the CRA for its midterm review at Year 15 of the 30-year term

Committee members emphasized the importance of refining the plan to create a sharper, more actionable document. Davis also noted that the process would include consultant support, community engagement, and best-practice analysis.

The committee provided consensus supporting this item.

##### **Land Acquisition Program Presentation**

Amy Davis presented the draft CRA Land Acquisition and Redevelopment Program, which aims to identify the strategy for property acquisition and specify the purposes for which it will be used, providing agreed-upon guidelines for the program. The proposed acquisition program identifies the types of properties that will be targeted for purchase and their intended purposes.

The committee discussed that CRA funds are not only for the property acquisition, but also for other related items such as demolition, remediation, and preparation for resale or redevelopment. Several examples were provided, including

environmental contamination issues from former gas stations or auto shops, and how Phase I/II environmental studies would inform decision-making.

The program proposes thresholds for administrative authority to expedite action on emerging opportunities without delaying committee or board review. Davis confirmed that this would be the first formal land acquisition policy for the CRA. She noted that it will undergo internal and legal review before being presented to the Board of County Commissioners (BOCC).

Committee members expressed support for the overall framework of the draft Land Acquisition Program. There was consensus on the need for clear guardrails and readiness to act on strategic properties when opportunities arise. Staff confirmed the draft will undergo internal and legal review before returning for final approval.

### **Proposed CRA FY26 Work Plan Overview**

Amy Davis reviewed the draft FY26 work plan that aligns with the draft proposed budget. Highlights included:

- **Linking Lealman Mobility Projects:** Increased to \$1 million to accelerate sidewalk installations and prioritize pedestrian safety near schools and main corridors.
- **Joe's Creek Infrastructure Improvements:** Continued investment with nearly \$10 million allocated for infrastructure improvements, as identified through the Joe's Creek Master Plan and/or to be used towards specific projects, such as the box culvert project.
- **Pilot Projects:** Alleyway connectivity and beautification programs, featuring low-lighting and public art installations, as well as the creation of an Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU) grant program.
- **CRA Plan Update:** Funding has been allocated for updating the CRA Plan to incorporate economic development strategies and prepare for the 15-year midterm review.
- **Demolition Reserve:** \$50,000 set aside for urgent removal of unsafe structures, especially in cases where CDBG funding is unavailable.

Davis explained that CRA funds serve as vital gap infrastructure funding, especially as general funds, gas taxes, and federal sources (like CDBG) face increasing constraints.

Committee members reviewed the proposed FY26 Work Plan and expressed general agreement with the funding priorities and structure. Although no formal action was taken, staff received positive feedback and will incorporate the input as the plan proceeds through the departmental and budget review process.

**Amy Davis also provided several updates on community and non-CRA initiatives, including:**

- **Senate Bill 1242 / House Bill 991**  
Amy Davis summarized proposed legislation that would sunset all CRAs in 2045 and ban new CRA projects after October 1, 2025. Staff will closely monitor developments.
- **Joe's Creek Master Plan Amendment**  
The amendment to the Joe's Creek Industrial Park Master Plan was approved by the Board of County Commissioners (BOCC), allowing for additional infrastructure research and adjustments to timelines due to delays caused by the storms last year.
- **CDBG-DR Funding**  
The county is preparing for its largest-ever infusion of federal disaster recovery funds. Community input sessions and surveys are underway to shape spending priorities.
- **Tree Planting Project:** Trees were successfully installed along 35th Way and 36th Avenue.
- **Board of Adjustment Cases:** Three zoning and variance requests are scheduled for April 2. One notable case involves a proposed land use change to allow a triplex in a single-family area.
- **Doubles Bar Closure:** The bar closed on February 28. Committee members discussed concerns over liquor licenses and whether the site may be used to preserve or transfer an active license.
- Staff provided updates on several blighted properties that have active code enforcement action.

## **VI. Advisory Committee Member Comments**

A committee member inquired whether stormwater utility fees collected in Lealman could be redirected for local infrastructure improvements. Staff clarified that these fees are limited to operations and maintenance and not to fund capital projects.

Committee members reiterated their support for utilizing CRA funds as a strategic resource to address infrastructure gaps, provided that clearly defined policies and public benefits guide their use.

### **Adjourn**

Jennifer Post moved to adjourn the meeting. Dominic Howarth seconded.

The meeting adjourned at 7:09 PM.