

# 2023–2024 Annual Report



## COMMUNITY REDEVELOPEMENT AGENCY





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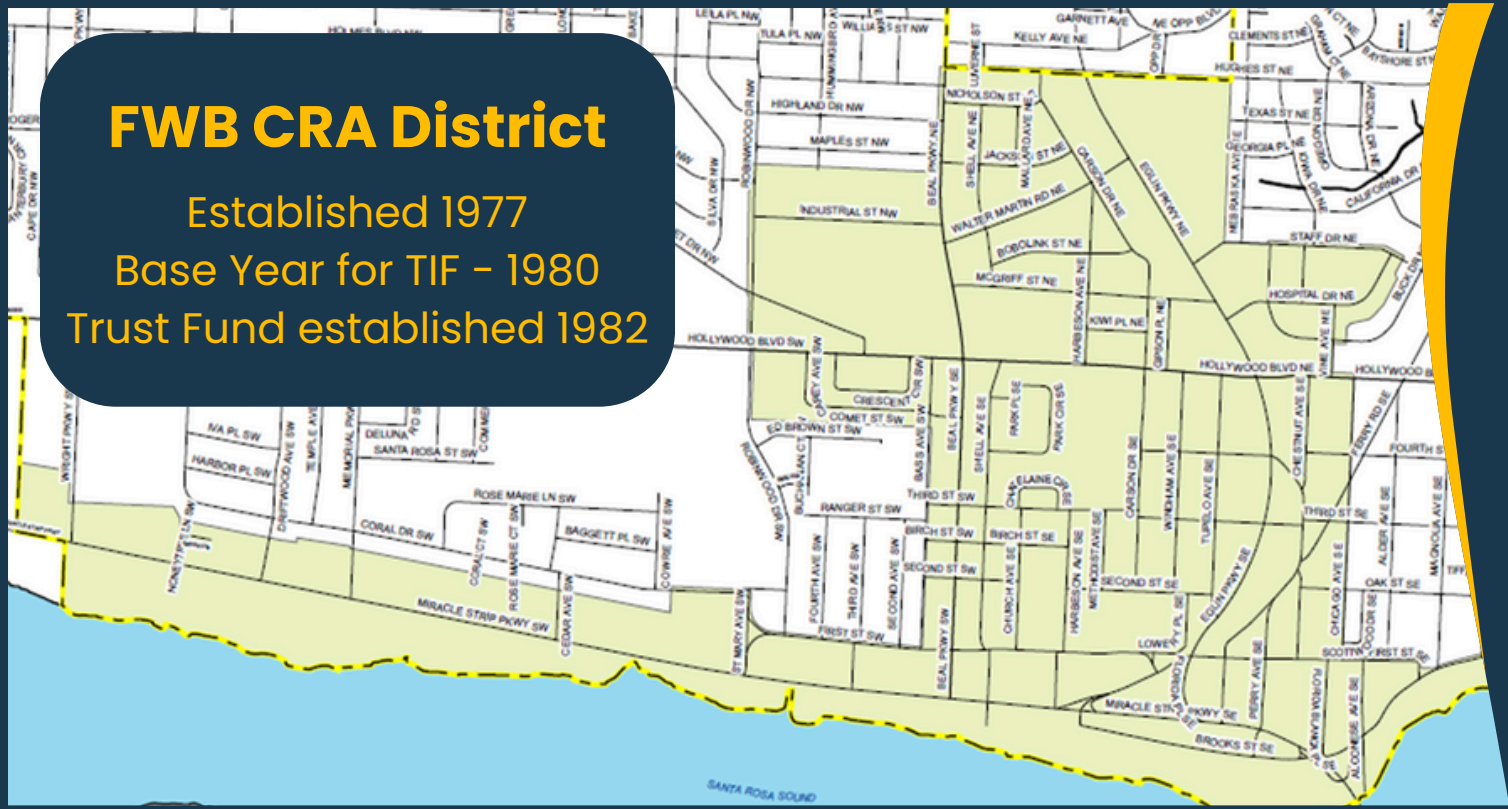


# FWB CRA District

Established 1977

Base Year for TIF – 1980

Trust Fund established 1982



The Fort Walton Beach Community Redevelopment Agency (CRA) was established on November 22, 1972. Initially focused on the downtown area along Miracle Strip Parkway/Hwy 98, the original CRA covered approximately 222 acres. In 1982, the Redevelopment Trust Fund and Community Redevelopment Agency were formed.

The CRA boundaries were expanded in 1998, adding 385 acres for a total of 607 acres, representing about 12% of the city limits. In 2012, the CRA plan was updated to address changes and refocus projects for the next five years.

In 2019, the CRA was further expanded:

- Three additional "Blighted Areas" were included based on a Finding of Necessity (FON).
- Resolutions 2019-6 and 2019-7 were adopted on May 21, 2019.
- An additional 219 acres were added, bringing the total CRA area to 826 acres.

The current Fort Walton Beach Community Redevelopment Agency Plan, updated in 2018, is set to sunset on December 31, 2048.



## VISION

To ensure that the City of Fort Walton Beach CRA continues to be a waterfront-oriented community that provides a mixed-use urban environment with a diversity of housing, variety of employment opportunities; thriving downtown core; vibrant and distinctive neighborhoods; attractive parks, open spaces, and cultural amenities; and well-designed public street, transit facilities , greenways, trails and blue ways.

## MISSION

To focus on eradicating blight, enhancing infrastructure, and improving community safety through targeted urban design and investments that create a more attractive, safe, and economically vibrant downtown area.

## 2023 – 2024 FOCUS

In addition to its traditional focus on Capital Improvement and Beautification projects, the CRA expanded its scope this year to safeguard these investments. The agency implemented Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) strategies in both public and private areas. These measures aim to deter negative behaviors that often result in blight, misuse, and criminal activates, thereby preserving the improvements made and enhancing overall community safety.



# CRA BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

**Nick  
Allegretto**



**Travis Smith**



**Gloria  
DeBerry**



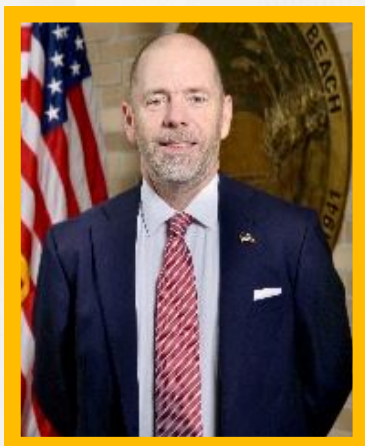
**DAVID SCHMIDT  
CHAIR**



**Bryce Jeter**



**Payne  
Walker**



**John  
Mead**







## MESSAGE FROM THE CRA BOARD CHAIR

**DAVID  
SCHMIDT**

Fort Walton Beach's Community Redevelopment Agency (CRA) has achieved significant success through collaborative efforts of city staff, property owners, residents, and stakeholders. The city has made substantial progress in preserving its heritage and enhancing public spaces. A Downtown Design study and improvements to our parks are spearheading development improvements within the CRA area.

Public safety has been addressed through innovative approaches to combat vagrancy and negative activity producers. Implementing Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) strategies, enhancing our community policing program, and expanding public-private partnerships have significantly improved the quality of life for both our residents and visitors, creating a safer, more vibrant community for all.

A major infrastructure project is underway with the construction of a new bridge connecting Downtown Fort Walton Beach to Okaloosa Island, featuring a 12-foot sidewalk to enhance pedestrian access. Additionally, the Around the Mound project represents a significant investment in traffic management, which is expected to support the area's vibrancy and authenticity.

These improvements aim to create an environment that attracts and retains talent, making Fort Walton Beach an appealing place to live, work, and play. The city's commitment to continuous improvement and strategic planning positions it for a bright future. Ongoing execution of these plans throughout the year will further contribute to the city's progress and development.

May God continue to bless the City of Fort Walton Beach, FL.



## CRA ADMINISTRATION



**CHRIS FRASSETTI**  
**GROWTH MANAGEMENT**  
**DIRECTOR**

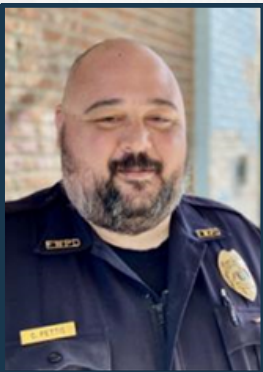


**JEFF PETERS**  
**CITY MANAGER**



**ALISA BURLESON**  
**ADMINISTRATOR**

## CRA COMMUNITY POLICE



**CHARLES PETTIS**  
**CRA SARGENT**  
**(PREVIOUS)**



**MARK WOHLIN**  
**CRA SARGENT**  
**(CURRENT)**



**GERARD**  
**BHAGWATSINGH**  
**COP/CRA OFC.**



**CHRISTOPHER**  
**CARTER**  
**COP/CRA OFC.**



# REDEVELOPMENT PROJECTS

## DOWNTOWN DESIGN GUIDELINES

The CRA contracted Kimley-Horn to initiate a Downtown Design Guidelines study. They organized a community engagement workshop and several stakeholder meetings to define community lead objective priorities. Participants in these sessions and respondents to the Community Values Survey, ranked the following goals for downtown Fort Walton Beach.

1. Create and strengthen the natural assets of downtown Fort Walton Beach.
2. Cultivate a vibrant and diverse central Main Street area.
3. Foster a pleasant, engaging, and diverse pedestrian experience.
4. Maintain and promote effective multi-modal circulation.
5. Promote character-rich placemaking with new developments that are human-scaled and context-sensitive.



The following design principles were developed based on the results from this study:

1. **Walkability** - The spaces between buildings should prioritize pedestrians, offering clear walkways, wider sidewalks, paths, street canopy trees, and non-automotive infrastructure.
2. **Green & Open Spaces** - Public realm designs should prioritize pedestrian comfort, offering access to parks, open spaces, green areas, and waterfront amenities.
3. **Engagement** - Develop a vibrant, centralized downtown that promotes community engagement through dynamic public spaces like plazas, public art, and parklets.
4. **Circulation** - Pedestrian convenience should take precedence over infrastructure needs. Buildings should have entrances that seamlessly connect to sidewalks, streets, and open spaces, with mid-block passages for longer blocks.
5. **Resiliency** - Building and site designs should consider long-term adaptability, ensuring private spaces align with the public realm. Facades and access points should prioritize visibility and access from sidewalks and open spaces.
6. **Character** - Designs should reflect and honor the rich history and cultural heritage of Fort Walton Beach, emphasizing the charm of small business and the vibrant local arts scene.



# BLIGHT REMOVAL AND BEAUTIFICATION PROJECTS

## The Gulfview

This historic hotel was donated to the city in 2018 and relocated to its new downtown location as part of a CRA Restoration project. It now houses several local businesses and serves as the venue for the CRA Quarterly

Stakeholder meetings. The CRA has maintained the facility and needed to focus on addressing several issues common to historic buildings. The lobby, which previously housed the Billy Bowlegs museum, was no longer in use but still contained many display items. These items were removed and the lobby received a fresh coat of paint. Additionally, the building's exterior was thoroughly cleaned and painted.

### TERMITE DAMAGE

Severe termite damage was discovered on the ground floor. Area was mitigated and flooring was replaced.



### DEDICATION PLAQUE

The original dedication plaque had become tarnished and lettering rubbed off.



### MAIN BUILDING SIGN



The building sign had become so worn that it was no longer legible.





## FERRY DRIVE DUMPSTER ENCLOSURE

Public dumpster area was misused with trash tossed around the area encouraging homeless encampments behind them near the bushes.

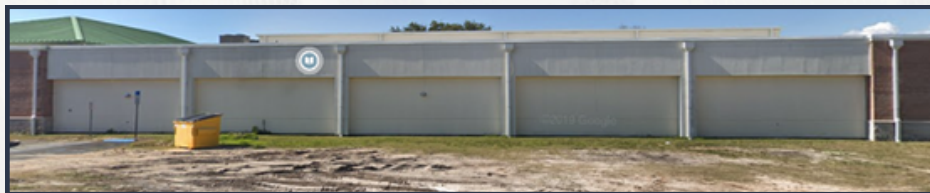


## LARGE MURALS ON BUILDINGS

On December 14, 2023 a call to artist went out requesting submissions for the largest mural in the city of Fort Walton Beach. Project specifications were....

- Theme - "Windows to the City of Fort Walton Beach
- Location - Exterior Library wall facing Ferry Rd.
- Five individual panels separated by columns
- Submission Deadline - January 18, 2024

The winning mural features larger-than-life bookshelves with actual book titles taken from the library and "postcard-style selfie backgrounds, all designed to reflect the unique character of the FWB Area



**BEFORE MURAL INSTALLATION**



**AFTER MURAL INSTALLATION**

## MURAL PARTNERSHIP

The CRA supported a local citizen's dream for a mural on the Brooks Street Side of the Historical Downtown Cinema. The artist agreed to construct the mural free of charge as long as the CRA would provide the paint.

The mural depicts several classical movies throughout many generations.





# CRA DESIMINATING INFORMATION

## Perry Rd. Fence Wrap

A fence wrap displaying pictures and QR codes of CRA development projects in progress was placed along a construction fence to hide the vacant lot at a prominent and high traffic intersection.



## Library Information Tower

This tower was placed downtown in front of the FWB library. It's purpose is to inform the public of local events, CRA program updates, and local weather. A downtown map located on the back provides needed directional information for visitors in the area.







## CRA STAKEHOLDER MEETINGS

### THE GULFVIEW

115 MIRACLE STRIP PKWY SE

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <p><b>JANUARY 12</b><br/>Inaugural Meeting<br/>Attendance: 13</p> | <p><b>CRA Grant Program &amp;<br/>Crime Prevention Through<br/>Environmental Design (CPTED)</b></p>       |
| <p><b>APRIL 16</b><br/>Attendance: 16</p>                         | <p><b>Carson Drive Improvements,<br/>Clean-up, and Traffic Control<br/>Community Input on project</b></p> |
| <p><b>JULY 16</b><br/>Attendance: 19</p>                          | <p><b>Carson Drive Project Update<br/>Community Policing Report<br/>Downtown Design Study</b></p>         |





# COMMUNITY POLICING PROGRAM

The CRA Community Policing Program's role is multifaceted and crucial for the development and safety of the CRA district. The team's mission focusses on visibility, community engagement, and problem solving. Our CRA officers make a significant positive impact on the CRA goals and objects by fostering better relationships between law enforcement, businesses, and citizens while addressing unique community needs.

## **PROBLEM-SOLVING AND EDUCATION**

- Address citizen concerns on-the-spot during area patrols.
- Utilize problem-solving techniques like the SARA model to provide tailored solutions.
- Educate business owners on relevant laws and regulations, such as ADA service animal guidelines.
- Offer advice on property security, including locks and camera systems.

## **COMMUNITY PRESENCE AND ENGAGEMENT**

- Maintain a constant visible presence in CRA areas, serving as a deterrent to crime and an approachable figure for citizens.
- Conduct daily walk-throughs of businesses, engaging with owners and staff.
- Provide direct contact via department-issued cell phone, allowing for easy communication with business owners.
- Host quarterly meetings with local hotel owners to discuss concerns and provide guidance on emerging issues.

## **AREA IMPROVEMENT AND SAFETY**

- Assist the CRA Administrator with conducting CPTED lighting analyses as needed.
- Address blight issues by coordinating with city experts to resolve landscaping and infrastructure problems.
- Significantly reduce vagrancy in the CRA area by connecting unhoused individuals with local resources and shelters.
- Attend local CRA area meetings to provide a police perspective and share relevant information about recent law enforcement activities.

## **SPECIALIZED CRA SERVICES**

- Provide a more relaxed and thorough service compared to typical patrol officers allowing for in-depth problem-solving.
- Participate in CRA details, using C.R.A.B (Community Redevelopment Area Buggy) golf cart to increase approachability and reduce barriers with the public.



# CPTED

## CRIME PREVENTION THROUGH ENVIRONMENTAL DESIGN

Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design is a crime prevention philosophy based on the theory that proper design and effective use of the built environment can lead to a reduction in the fear and incidence of crime, as well as an improvement in the overall quality of life for a community and its residents.

### CPTED PROGRAM AND INCENTIVE GRANT

This proactive crime prevention program was introduced to support the CRA Community Policing program. A non-matching grant with a max incentive of \$10,000 was created to encourage property owners to implement the following CTPED key concepts:

1. Natural Surveillance – the placement of physical features, activities, and people in a way that maximizes visibility.
2. Access Control – People are physically guided through a space by the strategic design of streets, sidewalks, building entrances, and landscaping.
3. Territorial Reinforcement – The use of physical attributes that express ownership such as walls and fencing.
4. Maintenance – The repair and upgrade of physical features supporting natural surveillance, access control and territorial reinforcement.

### HOUSE BILL 837 SECTION 8

This bill, signed by Governor DeSantis in March, 2024, offers multifamily property owners and principal operators a presumption against liability for criminal acts committed by third parties on their premises. This protection is contingent upon a CPTED assessment by a certified practitioner. Notification was sent out to all Multifamily properties within the CRA offering this CPTED service.



### CPTED PRACTITIONER CERTIFICATION



# SOUND PARK UPGRADES

This public park was donated to the city for the purpose of conservation, protection, enhancement and education of endogenous vegetation. It is located on the sound between an active restaurant and upscale condominium complex. Its intended usage is for passive outdoor activities.

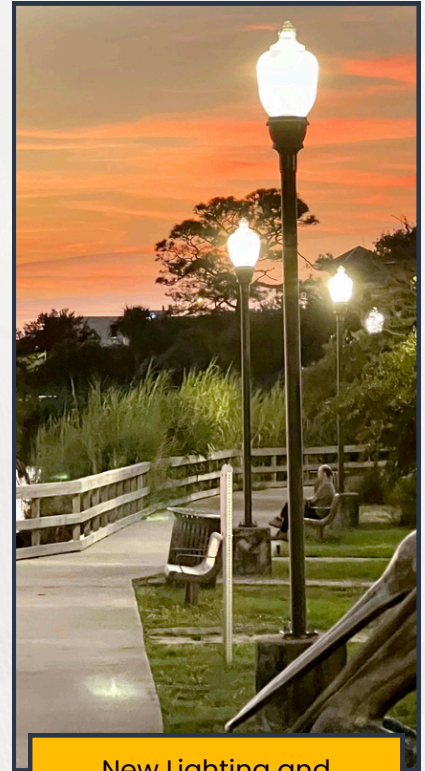
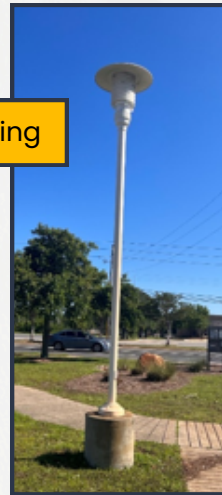
Negative activity from abnormal users had taken over the area turning it into blight. The park was no longer being utilized for its intended purpose.



Gazebo before repairs



Old Lighting



New Lighting and improved Gazebo

## Improvements completed

- Lighting upgrades
  - Replaced light in gazebo with protective dome
  - Upgraded all sidewalk lighting to 20 lumens
- Gazebo
  - Removed damaged benches
  - Installed code compliant support poles to safely support roof (current poles were bowing under weight of roof)
  - Paint poles white to mitigate graffiti
- Security camera installed to discourage loitering and negative activity

## Improvements planned for 2025

- Landscaping
  - New design to highlight foliage native to the area
  - Weeding and reseeding grass areas
- Hardscape
  - Add new gravel material to pathways
  - Replace decorative edging along pathways
  - Replace metal benches with CPTED certified benches to deter sleeping and loitering activity





# FINANCIAL REPORTS

## Fiscal Year **October 1, 2023** to **September 30, 2024**

The FWB Community Redevelopment Agency (CRA) Fund encompasses 5.06% of the City's activities and services and accounts for funding derived from City of Fort Walton Beach and Okaloosa County Increment Revenue Funds - proceeds from increases in the taxable assessed value of the CRA District.

The original CRA area was formed in 1980, with that being the base year for the purpose of determining the growth in assessed taxable value.

In 1998 and 2019, the CRA area was expanded to include additional areas. The TIF is determined by the growth in the assessed value of taxable property located in the CRA district from the base year to the current tax year and is multiplied by the current tax rate for the City and County.

Expenditures in the CRA area target eliminating blight in residential and commercial areas.

### CRA TAXABLE VALUES

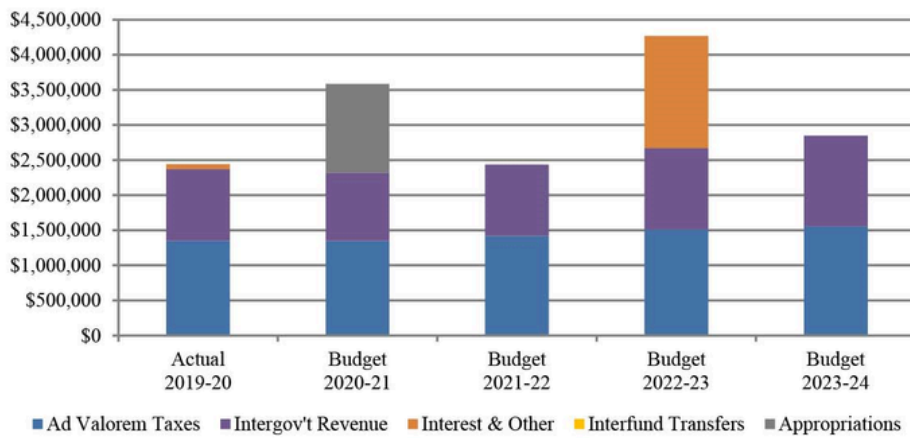
	<u>Original CRA Area</u>	<u>Expanded CRA Area</u>
2000	\$ 75,326,886	\$ 37,439,782
2024	\$274,765,342	\$150,133,276
<b>CURRENT CRA AREA TAXABLE VALUE</b>		\$424,898,618
<b>TOTAL CRA VALUE INCREASE</b>		277%



## Revenue Highlights

The budget is predicated on the millage rate of 4.6116 mills for the City's portion of the TIF.

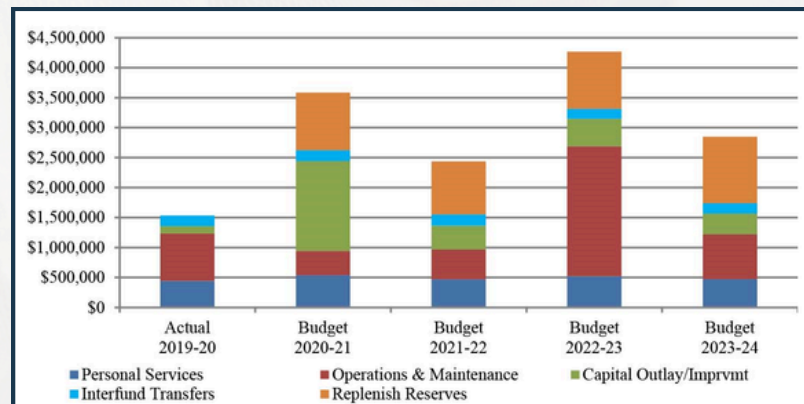
One mill equals \$144.35 per \$1,000 of taxable property value.



	Budget 2023-24	\$ Change	% Change
Ad Valorem Taxes	1,555,341	44,734	2.9%
Intergov't Revenue	1,292,003	134,613	10.4%
Interest & Other	0	(1,600,000)	(100%)
Approp. from Reserves	0	0	0%
	\$2,847,344	(1,420,653)	(49.9%)

## Expenditure Highlights

- Decreases in Operational expenses are primarily due to the Landing Improvements Grant being budgeted in prior FY2022-23.
- Decreases in Capital Outlay/Improvement are primarily due to Liza Jackson Park design and Heritage Park & Cultural Center addition budgeted in prior FY 2022-23.



	Budget 2023-24	\$ Change	% Change
Personal Services	470,368	(50,697)	(10.8%)
Operations & Maintenance	749,584	(1,418,583)	(189.2%)
Replenish Reserves	1,109,460	157,404	14.2%
Interfund Transfer	172,932	3,723	2.2%
Capital Outlay/Imprvmt	345,000	(112,500)	(32.6%)
	\$2,847,344	(1,420,653)	(49.9%)



# GOALS & OBJECTIVES 2024 - 2025

**FLORIDA STATUTE 189.0694**  
**IN COMPLIANCE WITH HB 7013**

PROJECT	GOAL	OBJECTIVES	FUNDING
Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED)	Chester Pruitt Park	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lighting Improvements</li> <li>• Restroom replacement</li> <li>• Activity enhancers</li> </ul>	\$175,000
CPTED/Economic Incentive Grants	Private Businesses within the CRA area	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Facade Improvements</li> <li>• Nuisance Abatement</li> <li>• Building Code Compliance</li> <li>• CPTED Strategy upgrades</li> </ul>	\$120,000
Wayfinding Signage System	CRA District	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Points of Interests</li> <li>• Public Facility Directional</li> </ul>	\$ 75,000
CRA Park Improvements	CRA District	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Landing</li> <li>• Vandergriff Park</li> <li>• Library Park</li> </ul>	\$ 1,000,000
CRA Strategic Plan Update	CRA District	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Update the current CRA Strategic Plan</li> </ul>	\$ 100,000

To evaluate the successful achievement of these goals and objectives the FWB Community Redevelopment Agency will:

- Analyze activity reports in areas that implemented CPTED strategies.
- Analyze grant funding expenditures and the effect on improvements within the CRA District.
- Determine the increase/decrease in CRA property values.
- Evaluate the percentage of wayfinding system completed and develop a timeline for completion if necessary.
- Review the progress of downtown park improvements and determine if additional funding will be needed to complete design upgrades as planned.
- Develop an implementation program in relation to the updated strategies, goals, and objectives listed in the newly adopted CRA Strategic Plan.