



WINTER GARDEN, FL

Winter Garden CRA Annual Report

March 31, 2025



Received by: Clerk the BCC 4/2/2025 mf
c: County Mayor
County Attorney County Commissioners
County Administrator

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1. Introduction

Since 1992, Winter Garden has been redeveloping and reshaping the neighborhoods and districts within the Community Redevelopment Agency (CRA). Major accomplishments started with the creation of the Winter Garden Community Redevelopment Agency, which has been an effective redevelopment and financing tool. CRA public projects over the last thirty years included the Plant Street and West Orange Trail streetscape, renovation of the historic Garden Theatre, surface parking lots and building a two-story parking garage. Linear parks, swings, fountains, a gazebo and clock tower were constructed, creating an outdoor living room in the center of Downtown, which transformed Historic Plant Street.



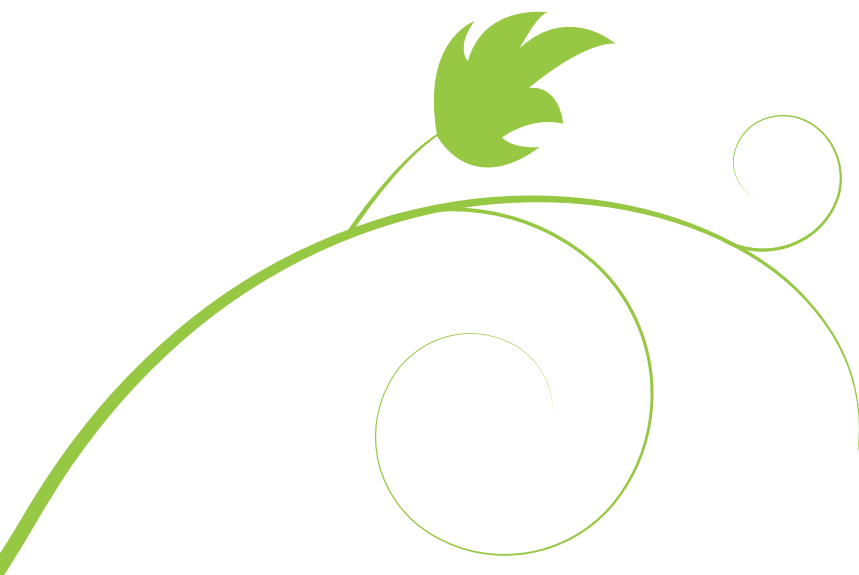
Historic preservation has been a big part of the revitalization efforts. The Edgewater Hotel was saved from demolition, the Garden Theatre restored, and two train stations have been preserved. A façade grant program was recently in place for many years to assist business and property owners in restoring and revitalizing their commercial storefronts. The Downtown District is listed on the National Register of Historic Places and last year the City resurveyed the District.

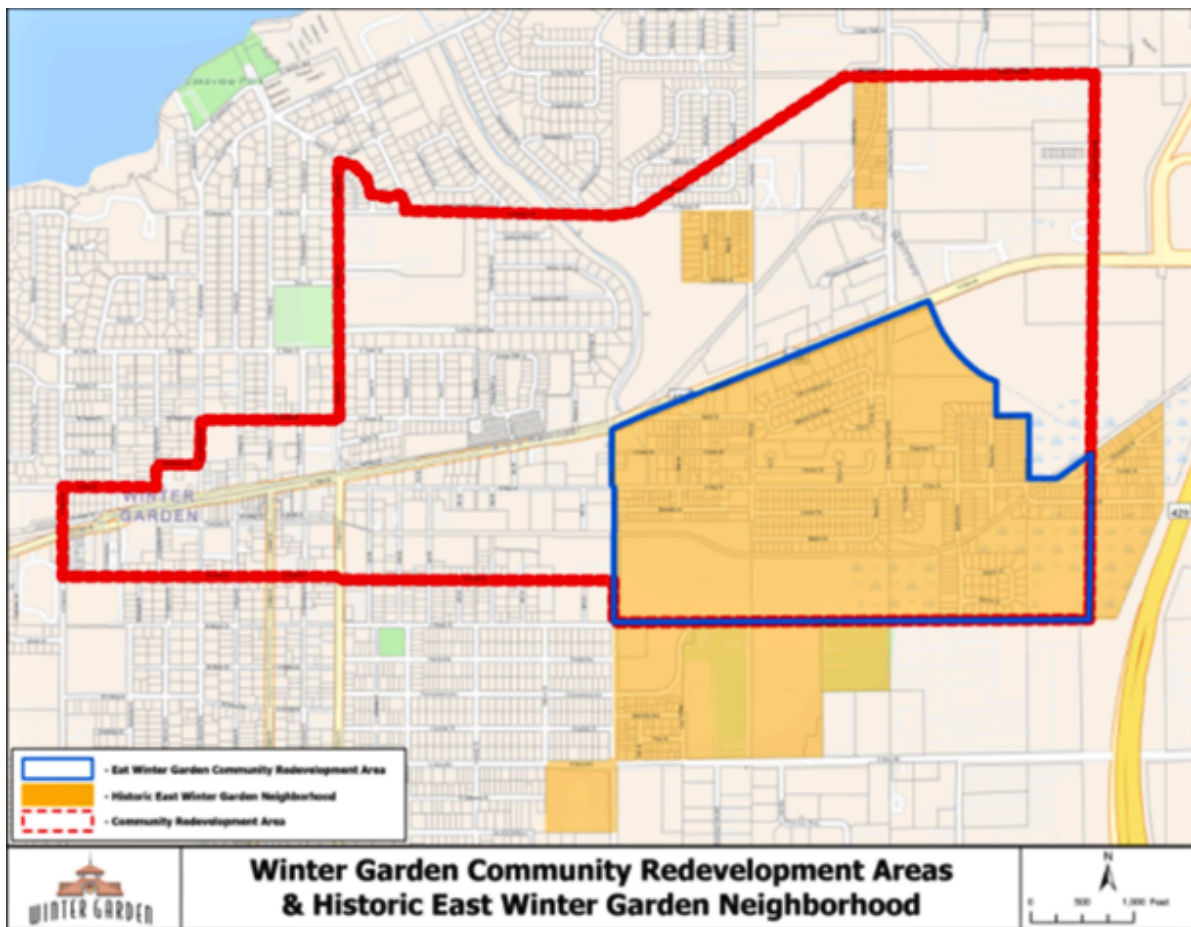
2022 was a major milestone, since the year represented 30 years since Community Redevelopment Agency was created. The Winter Garden CRA was scheduled to sunset at the end of 2022. Orange County and the City of Winter Garden approved a ten-year extension, which went into effect on March 8, 2022. The purpose and intent are to now pivot and concentrate the focus on East Winter Garden over the next ten years.

To further align with this focus, the CRA Plan was amended to include the East Winter Garden Plan as an implementation tool as part of the CRA extension – CRA funded this effort. In November 2023, the City was approached by the leading community advocacy organization, One Winter Garden, to formally name the East Winter Garden community the “Historic East Winter Garden Neighborhood.” The City was in strong support of this request and formalized the requested name in February 2024 through a resolution approved unanimously by the City’s Commission. In addition to the CRA extension, the City was successful in annexing an enclave area adjacent to the CRA boundary with Orange County’s assistance and approval. This enclave area is now part of the Historic East Winter Garden Neighborhood. Orange County has been an important partner in the City’s overall revitalization efforts by approving and extending the timeframe of the CRA – the City of Winter Garden is grateful for this partnership.

The [East Winter Garden 2022 Plan Update](#) can be found on the [Winter Garden CRA Page](#).

The Winter Garden Community Redevelopment Area is comprised of 820 acres. Below is a map of the CRA footprint denoted by the red boundary, the East Winter Garden CRA denoted by the blue boundary, and the newly defined Historic East Winter Garden Neighborhood area shaded in yellow.





2. Audit Report and Summary

Please find our audit report and summary at this link:

[City of Winter Garden CRA Audited Financial Statements Report for FY2024](#)

CRA FY2024 Financials

Total Assets: \$8,552,286

Total Liabilities: \$7,840

Total Revenues and Transfers Out: \$3,224,868

Total Expenditures and Transfers Out: \$461,856

The Winter Garden CRA is a blended component of the City and does not have separate financial statements. The Winter Garden CRA is audited as part of the City of Winter Garden's financial audit. The City's Certified Annual Financial Audit is located on the City's Fiscal Management page. All of the pertinent information, legal documents, financials and plans can be found on the [CRA](#) __ _

The Winter Garden CRA Members:

John Rees, Mayor and District 5

Lisa Bennett, District 1

Iliana R. Jones, District 2

Chloe Johnson, District 3

Colin Sharman, District 4

Jon C. Williams, City Manager

Charlie Mae Wilder, Orange County

The Winter Garden CRA Advisory Board Members:

Nick Asma

Derek Blakeslee

Larry Cappleman

Tim Keating

Jamie Holley

Carmen Horne

Don Wingate

Sharee Hodge

Torrance

Rhodes

3. Approved Plans

The CRA Plan was adopted in 1992 – the plan can be found at this link:

[Community Development Plan, May 21, 1992](#)

The East Winter Garden Plan was approved in 2018 and adopted. Then updated in 2022 as part of a CRA Plan Amendment – the plan can be found at the following links:

[East Winter Garden Plan, March 7, 2018](#)

[East Winter Garden Plan, Updated, December 2022](#)

The Orange County Board of County Commissioners unanimously voted on March 8, 2022, to extend the Winter Garden Community Redevelopment Agency CRA for 10 years. The City of Winter Garden approved the extension one month earlier at a City Commission meeting. The 10-year extension, which was ultimately made effective on October 1, 2023, will allow the Winter Garden CRA to leverage the redevelopment success in Downtown Winter Garden to benefit the Historic East Winter Garden Neighborhood. It is estimated that over \$20 million will be generated during this timeframe, and at least 75% of the funds will be dedicated to the revitalization of the Historic East Winter Garden Neighborhood.

Regarding the East Winter Garden Plan, the focus over the last few years has been on revitalizing the East Winter Garden Neighborhood. Promising strides have been made towards the plan since it was approved on May 24, 2018. The new plan, which was the result of much collaboration between the City, East Winter Garden residents and many stakeholder organizations, identified seven “**Big Ideas**”. The City has been working with the community to continue implementation of the plan to address these “**Big Ideas**”, along with the priorities set forth under District 5 and 6 goals listed in the CRA Plan.



THE BIG IDEAS



One Winter Garden

Increase connections between the Historic Downtown District and East Winter Garden while adding destinations along Plant Street that could provide outdoor dining, new businesses, and more local jobs. *Continue to advocate for East Winter Garden recognizing its unique identity and how that contributes to the rest of the City.*



Increase Homeownership & Housing Options

Increase homeownership and improve housing quality and diversity while respecting the scale of the existing community. *Adopt a Missing Middle Housing Ordinance city-wide to encourage the creation of duplexes, triplexes, quadplexes, and ADUs.*



Improve Health & Recreation, Safety & Security

Encourage more healthy food options in the area. Help provide activities and training for kids, teens, young adults, and the elderly. *Annex endaves of County land to provide continuity of safety and services.*



Safe, Comfortable & Interesting Streets

Enable pedestrians and cyclists to move freely throughout the area. *Add shopfronts and awnings along the streets. Use high visibility crosswalks at intersections. Provide bike infrastructure (especially for those who cannot afford to drive) as well as bike routes for recreation.*



Add New Destinations within Walking & Biking Distance, But New Development Should Be Respectful of Context

Plant Street should become a regional destination. Center Street should become a neighborhood center. Stay authentic and unique, but make it easier for small businesses to thrive. Add sidewalks, streetlights, street trees, and improve drainage at critical areas. Consider trail extensions along Center Street and through the neighborhoods.



Continue Support for Initiatives Underway

Continue to support the existing programs that bring the community together. Churches, church missions, nonprofits, and local nongovernmental organizations should work together with the City on common goals.



Former Technical College Should Become a Community Asset

The Technical College site should become a new center for the community and provide activities, recreation, and education for the residents of East Winter Garden. Create positive alternatives to illegal/unhealthy activity.

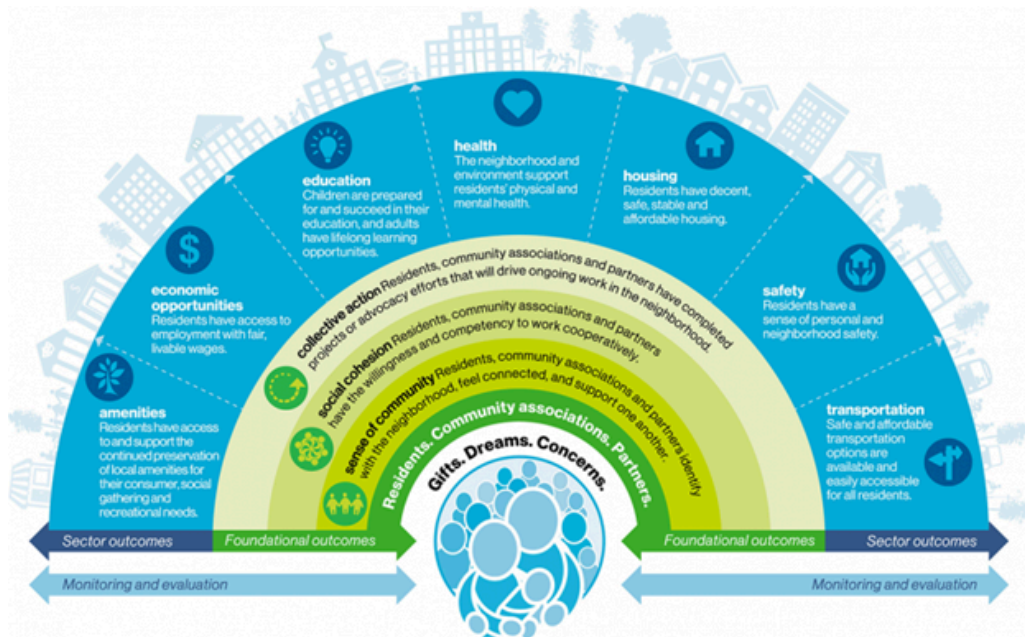
The content italicized reflects updates to the 2018 East Winter Garden Plan that were made at the 2022 community meetings and charettes but have not been adopted.

4. Performance Data

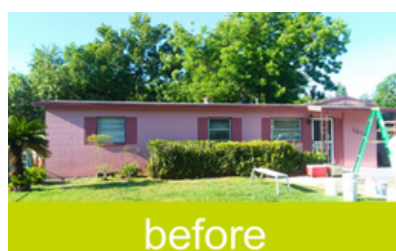
Completed Projects

1.Habitat for Humanity neighborhood revitalization.

Neighborhood Revitalization is a program in which West Orange Habitat for Humanity works collaboratively with stakeholders, community leaders, partners and homeowners to initiate and complete exterior home improvement projects on low-income area homes within the community. This program is important to the community because it fosters a shared sense of ownership, social cohesion, and pride that grows into collective action. Project funded by the CRA.



40 total homes have been completed and revitalized to-date (20 in the last year). Below are some examples



2.Zanders Park Improvements

Playground equipment upgrade installed in January 2024. This work has been the first major visible structure showing what is the beginning of the transformation improvement in the neighborhood. Shade structure amenity for public gather will be completed in late 2025. Project funded by the CRA.



Projects In-Progress

1.Streetscape Improvement Conceptual Design

The Murray Design Group has been engaged in this effort. Conceptual design work is current underway, with design completion anticipated later in spring 2025. Project work included community engagement on design elements like pavers, benches, light poles, bicycle rack, receptacle containers, trellises and street bollards. Streetscape design improvements will impact North St., 10th St., Center St., and East Bay St. Design items will also include rondels, street/sidewalk rights-of-way, historical markers and an amenity triangle park along Plant St. Work for construction drawings still remain. Project funded by the CRA.

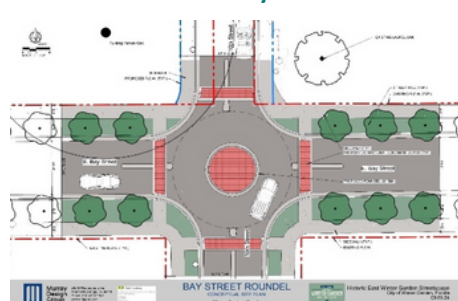
Triangle Park - Plant St & Along North St



10th / Center St



East Bay St



2.Dyson's Plaza Commercial Revitalization

The Dyson's Plaza is located at 215 Center St in the Historic East Winter Garden Neighborhood. It is the oldest family-owned business dating back to 1939 or 4 generations. It is a ground zero commercial revitalization effort that is intended to reignite the once vibrant hub of commerce on Center St. This neighborhood-friendly project features exterior improvement work of the building shell into two storefront units, interior work, outdoor seating, parking lot and landscape. The building footprint is 2,300 SF and was funded, in partnership with Orange County, by the CRA through a \$704K grant. Project broke ground on August 16th, 2024, with expected completion in summer 2025. Construction work continues.



Projects Approved and Funded

1.Sidewalks & Stormwater

The addition of sidewalks and fire hydrants, along with water main and stormwater infrastructure replacements, will provide improved safety, water quality and water pressure. Funded by Orange County, as part of an annexation agreement, this will fully integrate the recently annexed portion of the historic East Winter Garden Neighborhood into the City stormwater system. The City is grateful for the important work as it represents the collaborative effort between Orange County and the City of Winter Garden.



2.Zanders Park Improvements

With playground equipment and bench furniture already stalled, only the public gathering shade structure, fence upgrade and signage remain with related conceptual work underway. Construction drawings will then follow with work commencement/completion later in 2025. Project funded by the CRA.



3. Legacy Housing Rehab Fund

This project plans to fund, via a grant, major home internal/external repairs for 15 – 20 eligible/qualified homes annually up to \$50k - \$60K per home. The original program start encountered a delay as the City revisits how the operation will be managed to ensure maximum dollars are committed to the repair work vs administrative cost. Program document is near completion with commencement later in 2025. Project funded by the CRA.



4. Wayfinding

The Downtown Wayfinding has been funded at \$310,000. This project has been on hold waiting for revised construction drawings to be completed related to a road project, known as the Dillard Street Redesign Project. Unexpected increase in construction cost for Dillard Street project has caused a delay. Alternatives are under consideration.



5. Total Revenues and Expenditures

**CITY OF WINTER GARDEN
FY 2024/2025 BUDGET
COMMUNITY REDEVELOPMENT AGENCY FUND REVENUES**

		<u>2023 ACTUAL</u>	<u>2024 ORIGINAL BUDGET</u>	<u>2024 AMENDED BUDGET</u>	<u>2025 ADOPTED BUDGET</u>
120-0213-338.00-00	SHARED REVENUES - OTHER LOCAL	1,228,670	1,356,594	1,356,594	1,419,231
120-0213-361.10-00	INTEREST	178,644	28,841	28,841	179,675
120-0213-381.00-00	INTER-FUND TRANSFER IN	1,350,323	1,531,646	1,531,646	1,622,445
120-0213-399.99-99	USE OF FUND BALANCE	-	-	3,253,687	-
TOTAL COMMUNITY REDEVELOPMENT AGENCY FUND		<u>2,757,637</u>	<u>2,917,081</u>	<u>6,170,768</u>	<u>3,221,351</u>

**CITY OF WINTER GARDEN
FY 2024/2025 BUDGET
COMMUNITY REDEVELOPMENT AGENCY FUND EXPENDITURES**

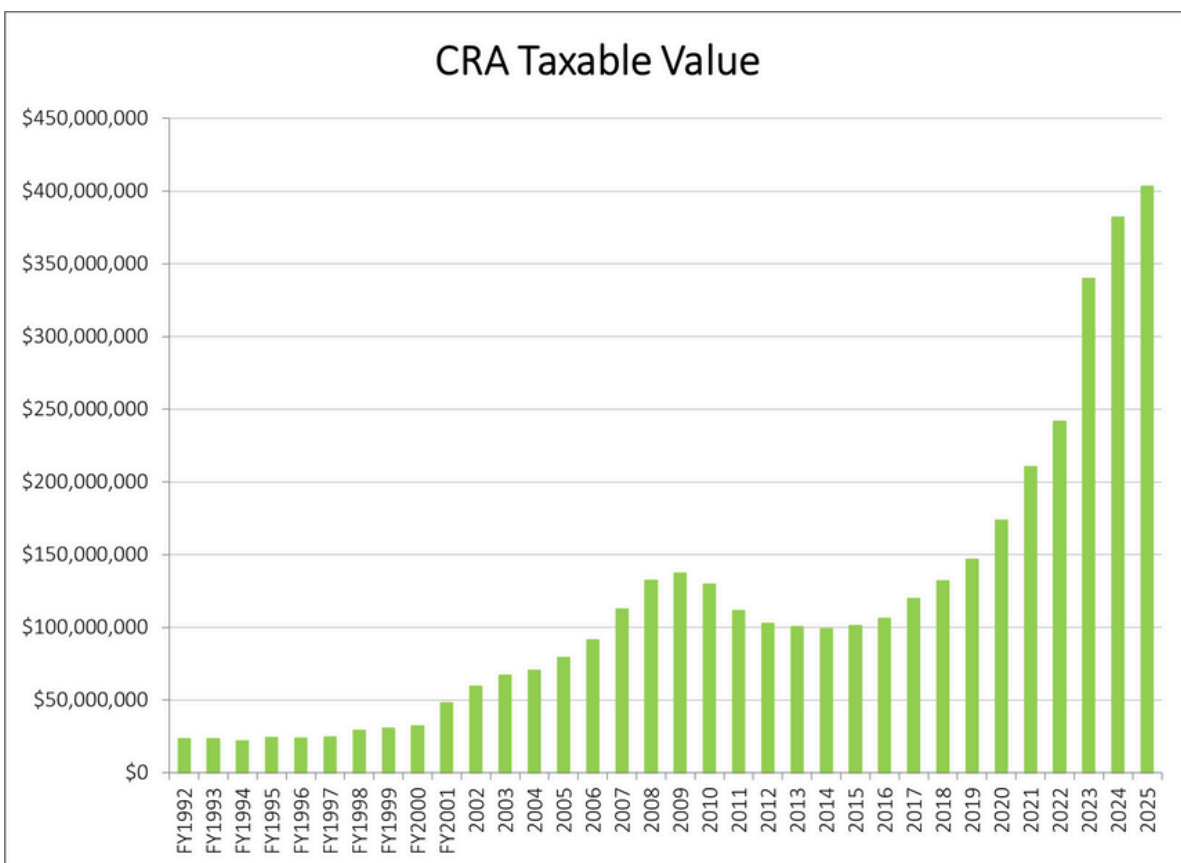
		<u>2023 ACTUAL</u>	<u>2024 ORIGINAL BUDGET</u>	<u>2024 AMENDED BUDGET</u>	<u>2025 ADOPTED BUDGET</u>
120-0213-552.49-02	INTERFUND MANAGEMENT FEES	16,721	16,721	16,721	16,721
	TOTAL OPERATING EXPENDITURES	16,721	16,721	16,721	16,721
120-0213-552.61-00	LAND	-	-	100,000	-
120-0213-552.63-00	CRA CAPITAL FUNDING PROJECTS	-	-	710,047	-
120-0213-552.63-00	DOWNTOWN WAYFINDING SIGNS	-	250,000	310,000	-
120-0213-552.63-00	EAST WINTER GARDEN REVITALIZATION	20,000	2,300,000	4,784,000	1,020,000
	TOTAL CAPITAL OUTLAY	20,000	2,550,000	5,904,047	1,020,000
120-0213-552.72-00	INTEREST	975	-	-	-
	TOTAL DEBT SERVICE	975	-	-	-
120-0213-581.91-00	INTERFUND TRANSFER	645,414	-	250,000	-
120-0213-599.99-99	TRANSFER TO FUND BALANCE	2,074,527	350,360	-	2,184,630
	TOTAL OTHER USES	2,719,941	350,360	250,000	2,184,630
TOTAL COMMUNITY REDEVELOPMENT AGENCY FUND		<u>2,757,637</u>	<u>2,917,081</u>	<u>6,170,768</u>	<u>3,221,351</u>

6. Original Assessed Real Property Values

The Winter Garden CRA was created in 1992. The assessed real property values were **\$23,347,286** the year the CRA was created.

7. Total Assessed Real Property Values for Current Year

The total assessed Real Property Values as of January 1st, 2024, for the Winter Garden CRA were \$381,891,827. A historical summary of CRA assessed values can be found below.



8. Total Amount Expended for Affordable Housing Rehabilitation, Property Acquisition, and Streetscape Design

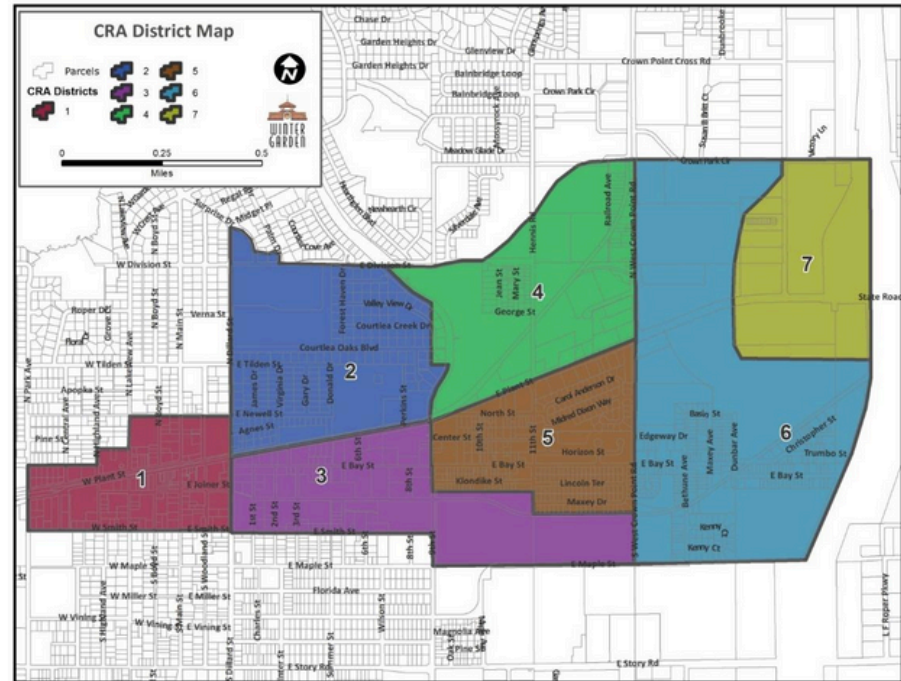
The CRA has budgeted in total \$4.865 Million towards East Winter Garden neighborhood, commercial, and park revitalization efforts, property acquisition, and street scape design. With CRA approved commitments totaling \$1,440,900. By end of FY 24, of the approved commitments from the CRA, a total of \$176,135 has been paid through the CRA for an originally City funded property acquisition, neighborhood revitalization, and streetscape design.



9. Achieving Goals of the CRA Plan

The two most significant projects completed over the last 30 years under the CRA Plan was the completion of the streetscape along Plant Street and the parking garage. Both projects have had a significant impact on the downtown CRA. Moving forward, the focus will be on District 5 and 6 as shown on the map below.

The plan breaks the CRA down into the followings districts and following that are the summary action items for each district:



District 1 - Historic Downtown

- Redevelop old buildings
- Retail 1st floor & professional 2nd floor
- Park & Plant gateway
- Dillard & Plant Gateway
- Civic & cultural meeting places
- Parking improvements
- Create downtown historic district
- Signage & façade guidelines
- Low density

District 2 - In-town Residential

- CRA created PUD
- Regional post office
- Redevelop old hospital site

District 3 - Industrial

- Focus on light industry
- Stormwater management
- Buffers between residential & Commercial

District 4 - Hennis Road Mixed Use

- Affordable Homes
- Focus on light industry

District 5 - E. Bay Street Residential (East Winter Garden)

- Streetscape & landscaping
- Historic preservation
- Improve recreational facilities

Note: A new plan was approved for district 5 in 2018.

District 6 - Medium/ High Density Residential

- Mixed use
- New school with recreation
- Prohibit billboards
- Commercial residential screening

Note: a new plan was approved for District 6 in 2018

District 7 - Expressway Commercial

- Intensive retail center
- Historic preservation - Britt mansion
- Public transportation
- Design guidelines



WINTER GARDEN, FL