



# **Panama City CRA**

***FY 2010***

***Annual Report***





# Panama City CRA

## Annual Report 2009-2010

March 28, 2011

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### Chairman's Letter

Dear Citizens and Stakeholders,

The Mission of the Panama City Community Redevelopment Agency (CRA) is to provide leadership in using the resources and tools provided by Florida statutes to redevelop and revitalize the four (4) areas of the city specially designated as redevelopment districts. Our goal is to create new investment and gradually reverse the blighted conditions we see in these parts of our City.

We are excited to report that much progress was made in 2009/10. In the past, the CRA Districts have been organized outside the traditional City Government framework. Yet, many of the decisions regarding long term management and care of capital improvements fell back to the City. In October of 2009 the CRA Districts were reorganized and now report to the City Commission who serve as the CRA Board and governing body under Florida Statutes Chapter 163. Now that the reorganization is in place we will make even greater progress towards our goal of revitalization. Listed below are just a few brief highlights of some accomplishments achieved by the CRA in 2009/10:

- Initiated a new community policing effort for the Downtown and Downtown North CRA Districts
- Initiated a new FDOT landscape beautification project for the MLK corridor
- Updated the Downtown North CRA Plan
- Expanded neighborhood watch programs
- Received a designation as a Florida Waterfronts Community in Millville and completed a new vision plan for the area
- Initiated efforts to start a community garden and expand the Local Market in St. Andrews.

All these efforts and more will improve the safety, enjoyment and quality of life for the citizens of our great City for many years to come. I am pleased to provide you with this report so that you can learn



more about the Panama City CRA and its ongoing mission to make life better for our City. If you are interested in volunteering your time, want to learn more or would like to join one of our many committees, please feel free to contact me, the CRA staff or any member of the City Commission so that we may use your gifts and talents to further strengthen and improve our community.

Sincerely,

Scott Clemons,  
CRA Board Chairman

### **Introduction**

The Panama City Community Redevelopment Agency (CRA) has a long history of working to improve the economic conditions of the community. First started with the Downtown Improvement Board in the 1980's, the effort to improve the business and economic climate of various parts of the City has evolved, grown and expanded from those early years.

Today, there are four separate CRA Districts each with unique history, purpose and boundaries. The Downtown CRA District established in 1983/84 is the original core hub of business in the community connected to the traditional bay waterfront. St. Andrews CRA District was created in 1989 and focuses on the St. Andrews Bay community and working waterfront associated with that area of Panama City. Downtown North CRA District established in 1993 includes over 1,100 acres.

The district includes major corridors such as Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard, Harrison Avenue, and portions of 231. Finally, the newest CRA District is Millville started in 2004 which is working to revive the areas touching Business 98 in the Watson Bayou area. Complete maps of the districts are available on the City's website at <http://www.pcgov.org/>.

Four separate Districts created under Florida statutes at different points in time, each with its own history, yet, working collectively, the CRA Districts represent positive progress to attract investment, create new jobs and improve the quality of life we enjoy here in Panama City. Please see the report below for additional details on the benefits and accomplishments of your CRA this past year.

### ***What is a CRA?***

Community Redevelopment Agencies(CRA) are a popular and effective redevelopment tool, used in 44 states across the country. In fact, they are one of the few remaining tools that local governments can use to "think outside the box" in order to attract new business, invest in infrastructure improvements and rebuild blighted areas. In Florida, a CRA is a public body created by a county or municipality to carry out community redevelopment activities. At present, there are 202 active CRA areas in the state of Florida.

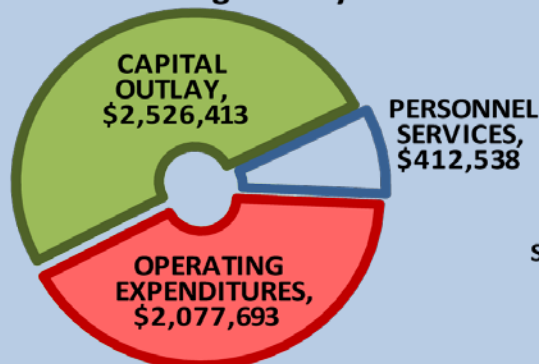
Activities for our CRAs are controlled by Chapter 163, Part III, Florida Statutes ([www.leg.state.fl.us/statutes](http://www.leg.state.fl.us/statutes)). A CRA may be governed by an independent board appointed by the municipality or by the municipality that created it. The city or county commission itself may act as the CRA, or a downtown redevelopment entity in existence prior to July 1, 1997 may act as the CRA. The CRA is established by the local government and functions within that local government. The CRA was created under the authority of Florida's Community Redevelopment Act of 1969, which contains a detailed listing of the powers made available to cities and counties, and those available to the CRA. The ability to invest the "net increase" of local tax revenues back into the CRA District above the set base year has proven to be very successful method of bringing about new economic investment and opportunity.

### ***Powers of a CRA***

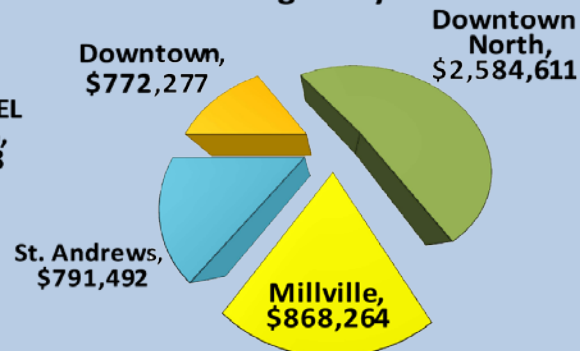
CRAs encourage economic development activities and redevelopment projects in slum and blighted areas. The Community Redevelopment Act of 1969 allows for the designation of special districts known as Community Revitalization Areas and confers upon the CRAs governing board special regulatory abilities. These abilities include issuing revenue bonds and utilizing Tax Increment Financing (TIF). However, these abilities are contingent upon the redevelopment plan having been approved by the governing body under whom these powers are vested and which created the CRA. When carrying out community redevelopment initiatives, CRAs may for example: acquire land; construct streets and utilities, carry out repair and rehabilitation programs; hold, improve, clean or prepare property; mortgage or pledge property; borrow money and invest funds and sell property.

## **Overall CRA Financial Information 2009-2010**

### **Total CRA Budget - City Wide**



### **CRA Budgets by District**



**Total Budget: \$5,016,644**

## ***Downtown CRA District Project Overview***



### ***Downtown CRA District***

- New Program Manager - The Downtown CRA District was managed by the Downtown Improvement Board since the 1980's. During this past year, the Panama City Community Redevelopment Agency hired a new program manager for the Downtown CRA District and west half of the Downtown North District.
- Policing Initiative Funding \$106,000 – Joint Project with the Downtown North District (\$125,000)
- 4<sup>th</sup> & Grace Parking Lot has been completed. (Approximately \$68,000)
- Marina Master Plan Update – RFQ and Selection of Consultant
- Harrison & Jenks Avenues Planning – Joint Project with the Downtown North District

### ***Community Policing Initiative***

The Downtown CRA District teamed up with the Downtown North CRA District to implement a community policing effort to reduce the blighting influence of criminal activity, vagrancy, and drug related activities. The two districts have entered into a contract with the Panama City Police Department for the provision of four full time additional police officers to patrol the two CRA districts exclusively. The policing efforts have already shown results of reduced vagrancy and reduced criminal activity. The police have increased drug related arrests to deter the drug activity in the two CRA districts. During their police patrols, the officers are also identifying and addressing obvious code enforcement issues.

Part of the agreement was to assist the police with the purchase of 3 bicycles and 3 segways. The Downtown CRA District also pays the rent for the Downtown Police Substation. The Police have also made a move to address the vagrancy and criminal problems by moving the Downtown Police Substation to 203 East 6<sup>th</sup> Street.

### ***Marina Master Plan Update***

The Panama City Marina is a major part of the Downtown CRA District. Besides serving all of Panama City as central marina facility, it is also the home to two of our most prized treasures: City Hall and the

Marina Civic Center. In 2006, the marina went through a planning process with Bozarth & Associates. Due to the decline in the economy, the marina plan was not implemented. The effort for this year is to update the Marina Master Plan to accommodate recent and future improvements to the marina. The Downtown CRA District advertised to hire a consultant team to update the Marina Master Plan. The CRA Board selected AECOM as the consultant team to assist the City/CRA plan for short term and long term improvements for the Panama City Marina. The planning and public input process for the marina is expected to begin in March of 2011.

## New Parking Lot 4th & Grace Avenue

There is a new parking lot available in the Downtown CRA District at the former location of the Cheese Barn at 440 Grace Avenue. The former building was demolished sometime in 2008 and the Downtown CRA District acquired the land for a new parking lot. This new addition to the previous parking lots completes the parking area behind the Martin Theater and adjoins the parking lot of the Bay County EDA Office on Grace Avenue.



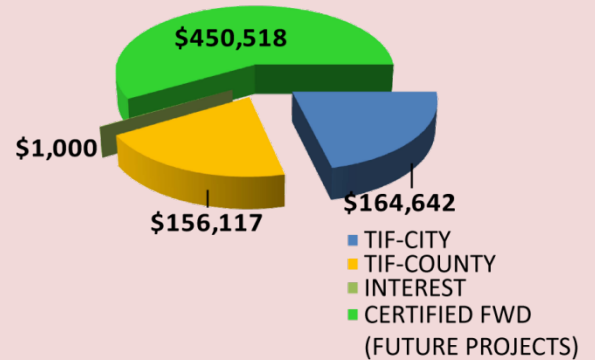
**4<sup>th</sup> and Grace Parking Lot Before**



**4<sup>th</sup> and Grace Parking Lot After**

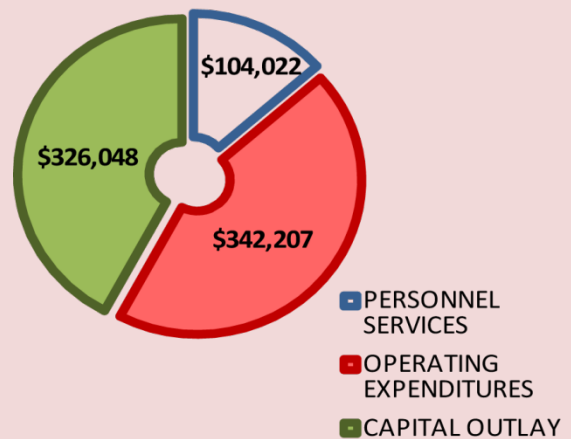
## Downtown Revenues

**Total: \$772,277**



## Downtown Budget

**Total: \$772,277**



**2009-2010**





### Clearing Vacant Parcels

The Downtown North CRA District implemented a Clearing Vacant Parcel program that has created a clear sight line for pedestrians and potential investors along the major corridor of State Highway 77/Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard. The Downtown North CRA District uses the concepts of Crime Prevention through Environmental Design as a tool in the reduction of crime and as a way to attract businesses to the corridor. Crime Prevention through Environmental Design (CPTED) is based on the premise that “proper design and effective use of the built environment can lead to a reduction in the fear of crime and incidence of crime, and to an improvement in quality of life”. CPTED strategies are ideal for anyone involved in designing neighborhoods, schools, downtowns, buildings, or revitalization efforts. It is an effective way of fighting crime and promoting business development.

Vacant properties reduce city tax revenues in three ways:

- They are often tax delinquent
- Their low value means they generate little in taxes
- They depress property values across an entire community

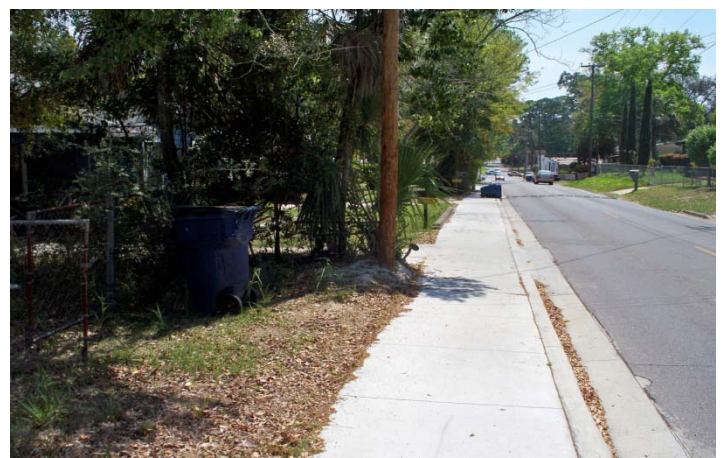
Lower property values mean lower tax revenues. As the population continues to shift from cities to outlying areas, cities are burdened with acres of abandoned, trash strewn areas which may also serve to hide criminal elements.



Vacant Parcels cleared on East side of MLK Blvd.



Hamilton Sidewalks - Before



Hamilton Sidewalks - After

**Hamilton Sidewalks** - Downtown North District (Glenwood) received new sidewalks in 2010. New sidewalks were installed on Hamilton Avenue from 6<sup>th</sup> Street to 11<sup>th</sup> Street. Walking is our most basic form of transportation. Walking can be a pleasant way to exercise, relax and socially interact with others in the community.

## MLK FDOT Beautification Grant



Panama City CRA partnered with the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) and received a Highway Beautification grant which was

implemented within the Downtown North CRA District. State Highway 77 (Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard)



aesthetics and environmental quality have been enhanced with new plantings which include Dwarf Yaupon Hollies, Indian Hawthorn and Lantana. This

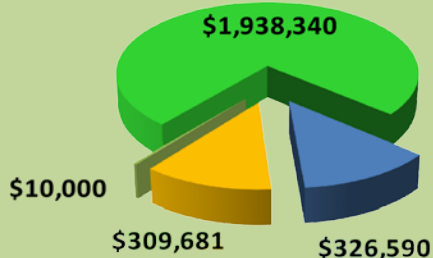
2 mile corridor now offers an inviting entry into the Downtown North CRA District, while also providing businesses with attractive frontage and creating an investment image that will surely be a magnet for new businesses to the area.

## MLK Retention Pond



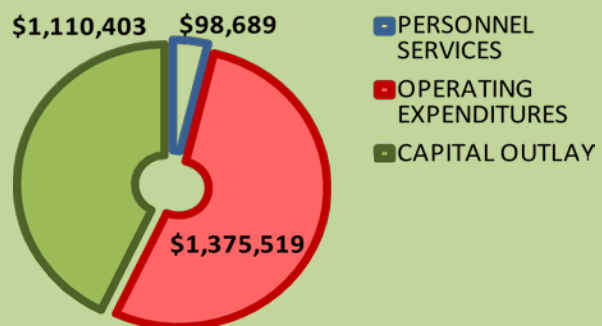
The Panama City Community Redevelopment Agency invested in the appearance of two stormwater retention ponds within the Downtown North District. Both retention ponds are located along Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard, also known as State Highway 77. Two ponds, once bound by chain link fencing with no lighting, added to the slum and blight conditions in the district before receiving an extreme makeover. Each stormwater pond was given new ornamental fencing, brick columns and lighting along street frontages. The new lighting brightens the immediate community and also embodies the concept of Crime Prevention through Environmental Design (CPTED). The community has voiced their satisfaction and appreciation to the Community Redevelopment Agency for this long awaited improvement.

**Downtown North Revenue**



■ TIF-CITY  
■ TIF-COUNTY  
■ INTEREST  
■ CERTIFIED FWD  
(FUTURE PROJECTS)

**Downtown North Budget**



**Total Budget: \$2,584,611  
2009-2010**



## St. Andrews CRA District Projects Overview



### Commercial Grant Program

The St. Andrews CRA District granted \$7,300 in funds through its commercial redevelopment and recruitment grant program in order to attract new and retain existing businesses. Jani's Ceramics was awarded a fifty percent matching grant in the amount of \$2,300 for a new sign and awning. This small grant award greatly improved a major storefront along Business Highway 98 (Beck Avenue) in the commercial waterfront district of St. Andrews.



*Before*



*After*

A matching recruitment grant in the amount of \$5,000 was awarded to Layla's Gelato in October 2010. The St. Andrews CRA District worked closely with the new business owners to find rental property within the redevelopment district. The St. Andrews CRA District awarded the business owners a fifty percent matching grant to develop signage, awnings, and other landscape improvements to the commercial property which had been vacant for the past five years. Business recruitment grants are awarded to target businesses identified in the St. Andrews CRA Business Retail and Recruitment Study completed in 2007.



*Before*



*After*

## Bayview Avenue Streetscape

The St. Andrews CRA District embarked upon its second major streetscape project in 2010 along Bayview Avenue from 10th Street to 12th Street in the heart of the waterfront commercial district. The project, totaling over \$400,000 to date, included the relocation of utilities from overhead to underground, sidewalk development, decorative lighting installation, stormwater improvements, landscaping and marina entrance redesign to improve traffic flow.



The Bayview project mirrors previous improvements made to Beck Avenue with the CRA District realizing early on the numerous benefits of relocating utility lines underground such as:

- the reduced risk of vehicular accidents;
- a decrease in damage due to hurricanes and high winds; and
- most noticeably the aesthetic appeal of uninterrupted vistas.

## Villa Gateway Park & Historic Fountain Projects

The St. Andrews CRA District worked closely with the City of Panama City to complete two preservation projects, building on the historic theme of the St. Andrews revitalization effort. In early 2010, Dr. and Mrs. Tim Smith

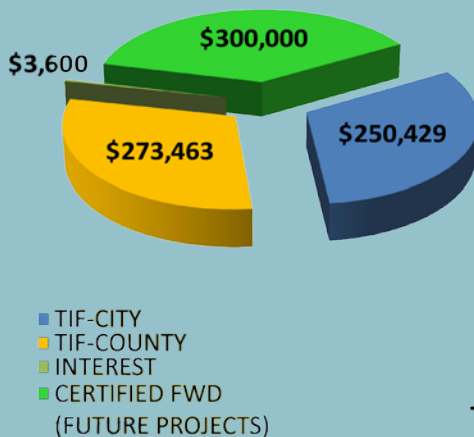
donated the historic Villa Gateway for relocation to the public access area at the West End of 12th Street. This area is now officially named Villa



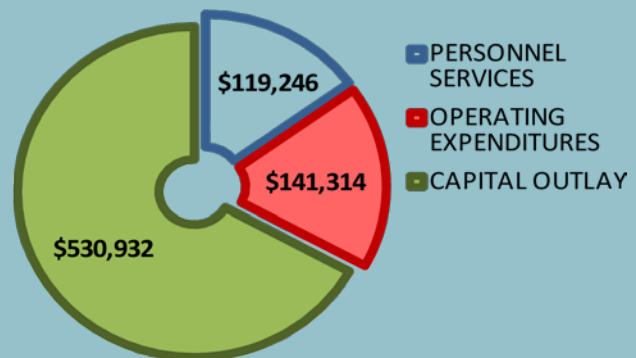
Gateway Park. The park has been improved by the installation of benches, lighting, landscaping, and historic signage.

A second project centered on a historic fountain donated by the St. Andrew Methodist Church and later relocated to Oaks by the Bay Park. The fountain is located on the east side of the park and has been converted into a decorative planter. The CRA has submitted a \$23,000 grant application to the Florida Department of Environmental Protection that would allow for landscaping, benches, lighting and pavers to enhance the fountain and also includes interpretive signage for park features.

**St. Andrews Revenue**



**St. Andrews Budget**



**Total Budget \$791,492**

**2009-2010**



## Millville CRA District Project Overview



### Millville CRA District and Waterfronts Florida Partnership Program

The City of Panama City applied for acceptance to the Waterfronts Florida Partnership Program in 2009 for the area located in the historic Millville community. The Waterfronts Program Area boundary lies within the Millville Community Redevelopment Area. Millville was accepted as a Waterfronts Florida Partnership Community in August 2009. This approval means Millville receives technical and financial assistance during a two-year designation cycle and continued support as a graduate community. To date, Millville has received \$77,000 in assistance funds from the State of Florida. The City designated a program manager and appointed the Millville Community Alliance (MCA) as the Waterfronts Florida Partnership Committee to oversee waterfront revitalization efforts.



### Millville Visioning

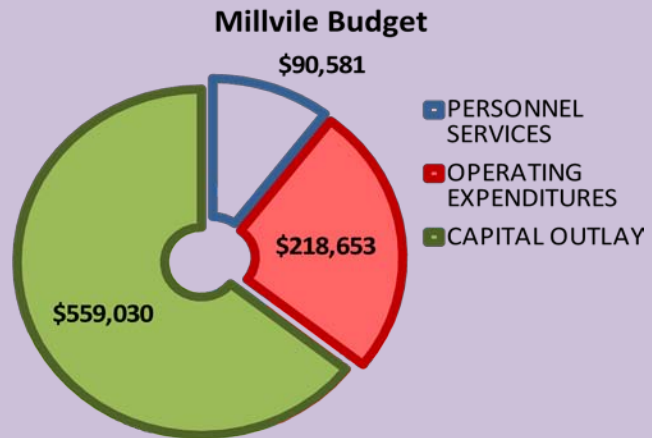
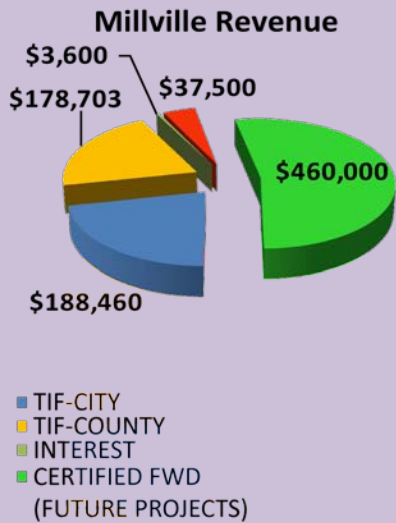
The Millville CRA District, in coordination with the MCA, embarked on the process of visioning for a new waterfront area in September 2009 and completed the vision plan in August 2010. The one-year process involved:

- analysis of existing planning efforts
- stakeholder participation
- refinement of existing groups to fill underrepresented stakeholder groups
- hosting of community vision meetings
- development of goals, objectives and policies to guide the revitalization of Millville

The results of these efforts are:

- A well-defined vision plan for the community that protects public access
- Identifies environmental and cultural resources and defines actions to prevent losses from disasters
- Revitalize the viable traditional economy.

The Millville Waterfront Vision Plan affirms the desire to revive and reinvigorate a waterfront neighborhood and to utilize its resources to its full potential. The Vision Plan provides the means to move the community forward by identifying programs, projects and priorities that will enable Millville to preserve its waterfront heritage and future benefits. Completion of the Millville Waterfront Vision is the first step in the community's journey in *Moving Forward* as a waterfront neighborhood destination of choice.



**Total Budget \$868,263**

**2009-2010**

**2009-2010 CRA Board Members**

**Chairman – Scott Clemons**

**Vice Chairman – Jonathan Wilson**

**John Kady**

**Billy Rader**

**Nancy Wengel**

For more information, Contact us at:

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Mary Sue Boles, Project Manager	Millville CRA	850-215-3873
Shawna Beji, Project Manager	St. Andrews CRA	850-872-7208



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