



HIGH SPRINGS COMMUNITY REDEVELOPMENT AGENCY (CRA) 2019-2020 ANNUAL REPORT

This report provides an overview of our 2019-2020 achievements and introduces projects either in the conceptual stages or currently underway for 2020-2021. Included is a glimpse into the future by sharing common goals established over the past year by hosting numerous workshops and design charrettes. We strongly believe in a community-centered approach and the 2019-2020 results indicate growth while highlighting an overview of our projects, programs and activities that will best redevelop our historically and culturally significant Downtown CRA.

BACKGROUND

In a memo from the High Springs CRA to Alachua County (dated August 25, 2019) the High Springs CRA recognized specific conditions requested by the County for continuation. The amended conditions, established on November 1, 2016, requested the High Springs CRA:

1. Reduce operations and administrative cost to 50% by the time of its next approval.
2. Capital projects emphasize public infrastructure and services.

METHODOLOGY

To achieve the 1st criteria, our budget must demonstrate the achievement of operations and administrative costs below 50%. This calculation is based on a total that is comprised of Tax Increment Funds (TIF) from both the City of High Springs and Alachua County, Rental Income, and Interest Earnings. (Revenues excluded for this calculation include City of High Springs General Appropriations

and the Appropriation of Prior Year Funds, otherwise known as the “Carryover”). The total of the TIF for 2020-2021 is \$197,202, therefore \$98,601 may be allocated to operations and administrative costs. Our current budget meets this criteria! The remaining 50% (totaling \$98,601) is being used for projects and related services. The High Springs CRA is the only local CRA whose TIF is based on the City’s millage rate rather than the County’s. As a result, our CRA loses approximately \$10,000 per year that could be invested in CRA eligible projects.

The following breakdown is proposed for 2020-2021:

	2020-2021	%	2019-2020 YTD Actuals	%
Personnel Total:	\$53,236	27%	\$19,713	11%
Operating Expenditures:	\$45,365	23%	\$25,691	14%
Operations Total:	\$98,601	50%	\$45,404	25%
Events and Marketing:	\$14,813		\$12,058	
Capital Outlay and Grant Total:	\$256,278	50% (Carryover not included in calculation)	\$57,032	
Eligible Funds Total:	\$197,202		\$187,736	

PROJECTS AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS

The major activities of the High Springs CRA are categorized into four primary areas:

- Business Retention
- Visitor Attraction
- Outreach and Promotion
- Looking Ahead

This report highlights these key areas and the associated activities to promote a thriving CRA. It is important to note, the High Springs CRA was not insulated from the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. Many of the activities planned for this report period were augmented, cancelled, or delayed. Additionally, turnover in critical staff further exacerbated our ability to accomplish activities. Nonetheless, despite these unprecedented challenges, the High Springs CRA was still able to complete important initiatives to support business growth and foster visitors to our area.



BUSINESS RETENTION

The High Springs CRA is home to a variety of businesses, including service, retail, and restaurant industries. In order to cultivate a welcoming and sustainable business environment, the High Springs CRA continued to provide strong support to our business community.

The *Façade Grant Program* assists eligible businesses and organizations by enhancing the street-visible appearance of their property. During the 2019-2020 year, the High Springs CRA distributed \$13,400 through the Façade Grant Program to:

1. 1st Avenue Centre - \$5,000
2. The Talented Cookie, LLC - \$3,750
3. Great Outdoors Restaurant - \$3,450
4. Law Office of Maurice T. McDaniel, LLC - \$1,200

Additionally, businesses were made aware of available CARES Act funding through Alachua County. This funding will provide financial support to businesses with eligible COVID-19 expenses.



VISITOR ATTRACTION

Tourism is a vital part of our High Springs economy. Visitors can enjoy a unique offerings of art, antiques and outdoor adventures with our many springs that make High Springs a refreshing getaway. Surrounded by the natural attractions of

the Santa Fe River, canoeists, cave divers and campers can escape, experience and enjoy natural High Springs.

- The High Springs Farmers' Market Pavilion is a new 3,000 sq. ft. facility located within the heart of Downtown. This new facility will provide our Farmers' Market with a permanent home allowing for continued growth and opportunity in Downtown. The High Springs CRA funded nearly \$37,000 for this project.
- The High Springs CRA assisted the High Springs Rotary Club presenting their 27th Annual Car Show in October 2019 along Main Street in Downtown. This event had nearly 125 participants showcasing hotrods, classic cars and modern sports cars attracting nearly 1,000 spectators to Downtown High Springs.
- The High Springs Chamber of Commerce, with assistance by the High Springs CRA, celebrated the beginning of the holiday season with the lighting of the City's Christmas tree along Main Street. This event attracted nearly 400 people last year with children enjoying activities ranging from cookie decorating to riding on the *Polar Express* train.
- Working in partnership with the High Springs Chamber of Commerce, the High Springs CRA assisted with the planning and production of our annual High Springs Nighttime Christmas Parade. This event has become a community favorite as citizens begin to line our streets long before the parade begins for the best view of the floats.
- Since 2012, Music in the Park has grown from a grass roots effort into a full-fledged concert series, producing more than 80 events showcasing a variety of artists and music genres. The High Springs CRA provides sponsorship

assistance as it attracts visitors to High Springs to enjoy music and other downtown activities.



OUTREACH AND PROMOTION

As the “Gateway to the Springs,” the High Springs CRA and the City of High Springs strives to “promote the future while preserving the past.” Working with our local businesses and organizations to promote a thriving High Springs while maintaining our small-town charm, is an

important part of our mission.

- In Fall 2019, and again in 2020, the High Springs CRA and City of High Springs promoted our area in the Guide to Greater Gainesville. This feature article aided our businesses, restaurants and other tourist attractions by showcasing our unique small-town charm. Through its distribution of 35,000 printed copies in North Central Florida, including every hotel room in Gainesville, and worldwide digital availability, High Springs increased its visibility showcasing our many attractions. The High Springs CRA and the City of High Springs each contributed \$5,000 to this project.
- High Springs CRA staff performed several outreach activities during this reporting period. As can be expected, this was limited due to the delay or cancelation of programs, activities and events due to COVID-19. However, CRA staff made presentations and participated in events with the High Springs Chamber of Commerce, the High Springs Lions Club, the High Springs Rotary Club and the Kiwanis Club of Santa Fe.



LOOKING AHEAD: FISCAL YEAR 2020-2021 AND BEYOND

Currently the High Springs CRA has started several projects to enhance Downtown High Springs. Downtown is an important part of our community and is the driving force for tourism and economic opportunity. Creating

an attractive and welcoming Downtown is critical for the success of our local community.

- The current landscaping along Main Street and other areas within the High Springs CRA district are being replaced with Florida Friendly plants that are native to North Central Florida, low maintenance, and drought resistant. This improvement will help to highlight our beautiful Downtown area helping to attract more visitors.
- The High Springs CRA is currently partnering with a lighting company to enhance our lighting Downtown. The current lighting is not conducive to post sunset activities and attractions. This improved lighting will allow our visitors to move safely through Downtown while enjoying our many businesses open in the evenings.
- The High Springs CRA is conscious of environmental impacts, including alternative fuel sources. As the demand for electric vehicles has increased, so has the need for charging stations. The High Springs CRA is filling this need by partnering with a local business to provide charging stations allowing those who need to charge their vehicles the opportunity to visit beautiful High Springs while charging their vehicle.

CLOSING

The High Springs CRA is financially positioned for long-term success by making immediate and long-lasting impacts within the High Springs community. Our planned projects will enhance Downtown for our businesses, local community, and visitors. They will generate excitement and the opportunities necessary for High Springs to thrive. Continued collaboration and partnership with our local businesses and civic organizations help ensure our success and set the stage for these projects to maximize their local impact.