

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The City of Wauchula Community Redevelopment Agency (CRA) contracted with Kimley-Horn and Associates, Inc., to provide a review and update to the adopted 1997 Community Redevelopment Plan. The purpose of the CRA is to act as a tool for the City to stimulate economic recovery and reinvestment to improve local conditions. Kimley-Horn and Associates, Inc., with support from its team members Florida Economic Advisors, LLLC, and Wallis Murphey Boyington Architects, Inc., have prepared the 2010 Plan Update. The 2010 Plan presents the vision for the CRA that was developed with consideration of the inventory and analysis of existing conditions within the City and CRA, on-site field inspection and investigations and review of adopted City Plans (Comprehensive Plan, Land Development Regulations, 10-Year Water Supply Plan, Capital Improvements Plan, Hardee County Long-Term Recovery Plan). The on-site investigations included the transportation and pedestrian network, stormwater infrastructure, parking and circulation, building conditions, landscaping, and aesthetics. The Plan is also based on interviews with identified stakeholders (residents, business owners, City and County officials, CRA Board and staff), and community input and comments received throughout the public involvement process. The Plan is intended to be a guide for CRA and local government decisions, and implemented over the course of the CRA's remaining lifetime.

This Plan includes updated socio-economic and demographic analysis, analysis of current and projected funding through Tax Increment Financing (TIF), alternative funding opportunities, identification of targeted catalyst sites (i.e., those that assist the CRA to implement the overall vision), and strategies for improvements within the CRA. Based on current TIF projections, the analysis estimates the CRA could expect to receive approximately \$687,000 (average) per year over the next 15 years; totaling approximately \$10,000,000 by FY 2024-25 (assuming an extension to the CRA program is adopted beyond the current 2022 time frame and as permitted by Florida Statute).

The Plan divides the CRA into four (4) distinct geographic areas for purposes of analysis and recommendation, and also to allow for more specific and targeted use of CRA funds



for projects and improvements. These areas include: Downtown Core, North CRA, South CRA and the East CRA/Peace River. The Downtown Core includes the area centered along Main Street and extending between Florida Avenue to 3<sup>rd</sup> Avenue and includes the majority of downtown business and governmental functions. The North CRA is one of the two primarily residential areas within the City and includes properties north of Oak Street to the northern CRA boundary. The South CRA is the second main residential area of the City and includes properties south of Bay Street to approximately Stenstrom Road. Both the North and South CRA subareas include properties east and west of U.S. 17. The East CRA/Peace River sub-district includes primarily City owned facilities (i.e., Peace River Park, water and wastewater treatment plants) and extends east from Griffin Road to the old airport property. These areas are further identified, including specific information and analysis including location and condition of existing sidewalks, stormwater management, and water and wastewater infrastructure. Each of these sub-districts is unique based on their strengths, challenges and opportunities, and targeted improvements specifically identified for implementation and in support of the CRA's purpose. In addition, City-owned properties and/or properties of interest are also identified within each sub-district. The East CRA/Peace River sub-district is the only area that includes all publicly owned property.

The CRA was established in 1997 and included, at that time, the entirety of the City. While the City of Wauchula has subsequently annexed properties and expanded the City limits, the CRA boundary has remained intact since its creation. Although the Plan does not recommend large-scale expansion of the CRA boundary, smaller expansions may be supported based on subsequent analysis and the required Finding of Necessity. Based on the adopting ordinance, the CRA is currently set to expire in 2022 (i.e., 25 years after adoption) unless an extension of this time period is undertaken. The CRA cannot extend beyond 30-years as limited by state statute.

This Plan takes into consideration and analyzes the properties and programs within the CRA and provides guidance on recommended future CRA projects, programs, and sites envisioned to serve as a catalyst for future development and redevelopment opportunities, transportation and mobility opportunities, and overall redevelopment efforts to support economic and community vitality. The identified catalyst sites include a redevelopment site (Coker Fuel Building), green field development (U.S. 17 South/Main Street) and a community/civic use to show movies or similar functions (Civic Auditorium/Historic City Hall). These three catalysts are further detailed below:

1. Coker Fuel Building - includes the renovation of the existing building for incubator retail/office/restaurant space with smaller storefronts. This site also includes the demolition of a portion of the building (rear) dam-

aged during the hurricanes of 2004. In addition, this site includes the construction/expansion of the Heritage Park parking lot and alleyway improvement extending to 8th Avenue. The development of the lot behind the Coker Fuel Building could add an additional 42 parking spaces in an area identified for increased parking needs and community space.



2. U.S. 17/Main Street - includes the development of a community identity sign/message board type, pedestrian/farmer's market area, and parking lot construction. The sign is designed to provide increased visual opportunities for community and special event announcements including "Grillin and Chillin" or similar events. The current parking lot, including the lot across U.S. 17 behind the Chamber of Commerce office is considered to be in fair condition and underutilized. Redevelopment of the parking lot



Courtesy of Wallis Murphey Boyington Architects, Inc.

(or lots) including reconfiguring the parking space layout will maximize their ability to provide additional parking within this corridor. Currently, a portion of the site included in the concept plan is owned by a private entity and no agreement is in place to permit these projects. Although this concept plan illustrates the placement of the improvements on the corner, this plan is portable and can be constructed on one of multiple sites owned within close proximity to the intersection and still achieve the desired outcome.



Courtesy of Wallis Murphey Boyington Architects, Inc.

3. Civic Auditorium/Historic City Hall – this site is currently home to the City’s Community Development Department and City Commission chambers. The majority of the building includes a theater/performing arts-style arrangement including approximately 400 seats, large stage and audio/visual equipment. As a result of the community’s investment in restoration of the venue in 1997, this site could be adapted to allow for the showing of movies or similar activities alone or as part of civic/community-wide events. It is



recommended the City/CRA seek a public-private partnership through a Request For Qualifications (RFQ) to companies capable of providing that service. This site and the proposed use are consistent with other similarly situated facilities in the United States (see examples in the Market Analysis section of the Plan).

Additional recommendations with regard to the regulatory environment (i.e., Unified Land Development Code, Comprehensive Plan) as well as future (potential) capital projects and programs are also provided in this Plan Update. Regulatory revisions include additional goals, objectives and policies within the Comprehensive Plan that address the CRA as a whole instead of focusing in primarily on the downtown area and recommended amendments to the current ULDC with regard to allowable signage (height, type and location), provisions for shared parking and/or allowance for parking facilities within close proximity to a site and additional support for mixed use projects. Projects range from short-term (1-5 years), mid-term (5-10 years), and long-term (10-15 years) projects which include recommendations regarding infrastructure improvements, including sidewalk improvements, CRA grant programs for residential and commercial structures, and ongoing code enforcement activities.

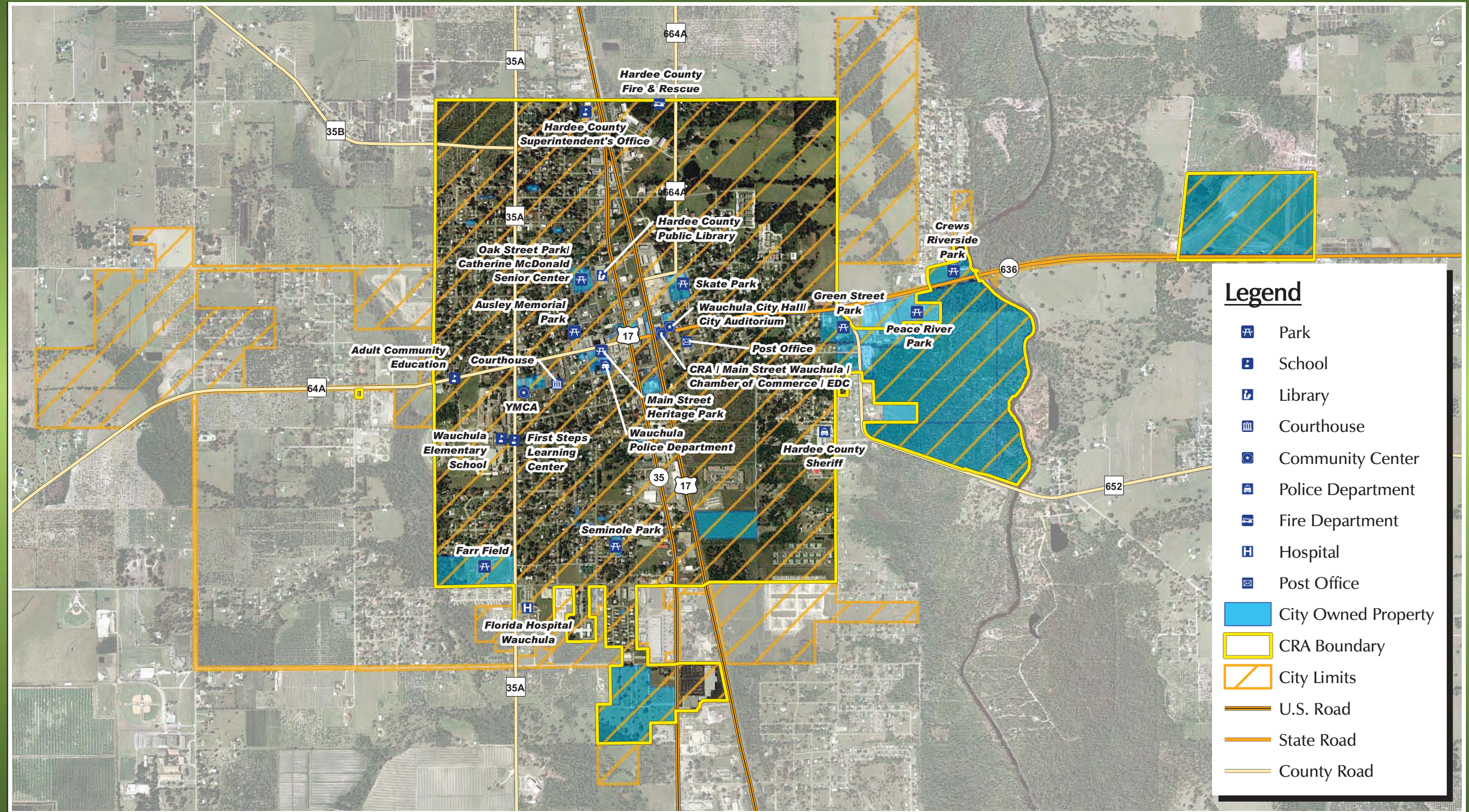
### *Implementation Recommendation*

It is important the leadership of the community support the Plan and review the Plan on a regular basis. The Plan’s is dependent on advocacy and support by the CRA and the City Commission. Historic preservation is identified through various City plans and codes, and needs to continue to be supported due to the presence

of significant historic structures and development pattern exhibited within the CRA. In addition, the City and CRA should look at ways to include and encourage involvement by all segments of the community, capitalizing on the socio-economic diversity within the community. Strategies include support for special events and programs that encourage additional visitors to the CRA. As a result of considerable change to structures and public assets with the CRA from a series of hurricanes in 2004 and the identified capital improvement program, extension of the life of the CRA to the statutory maximum of thirty years (to 2027) is

recommended. Projections indicate that the CRA could generate \$10.3 million in TIF revenue over the next 15 years to support these activities. In addition, state and federal grant programs exist that could provide additional financial resources for community and economic development. Based on the City’s “pay-as-you-go” approach, projects listed within this Plan must be prioritized based on available funding and opportunities for public-private partnerships. Alternatively, the City can consider aid or long term financing or bonding as a financial implementation strategy to complete these projects.

In addition, the assessment of the south boundaries and annexation areas suggests that some limited parcels be considered for inclusion within the CRA, particularly where parcels or property owners is split by the CRA boundary. Any expansion would need to be reviewed as part of a Finding of Necessity for the properties to ensure they meet the statutory definitions for properties and would also require discussions with Hardee County.



### Legend

- Park
- School
- Library
- Courthouse
- Community Center
- Police Department
- Fire Department
- Hospital
- Post Office
- City Owned Property
- CRA Boundary
- City Limits
- U.S. Road
- State Road
- County Road

# City of Wauchula Community Redevelopment Agency

## CRA Points of Interest Map

SCALE: IN FEET  
 0 375 750 1,500 Feet  
 DATE: MAY, 2010  
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City of Wauchula, Florida



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