

MAYOR
SHEILA
DeCiccio
CITY of WINTER PARK



Dear Friends and Neighbors,

The city recently negotiated a 10-year extension and geographical expansion of its Community Redevelopment Agency (CRA) and there seems to be a lot of buzz, and some confusion, as to what that means.

I sat down with City Manager Randy Knight and posed some questions to help clarify the issue.



COMMUNITY REDEVELOPMENT AGENCY (CRA) FAQs

Q: WHAT IS A CRA AND HOW DOES IT WORK?

A: A Community Redevelopment Agency (CRA) is created by interlocal agreement between the city and the county to jointly fund projects and programs that improve the area's economic, social and physical conditions. The funding comes from the growth in taxable value of the properties located within the CRA, so only CRA property taxes are helping to support CRA projects.

The county and the city each contribute their share of the growth in taxes from within the CRA to be reinvested within the defined area. With collaborative effort and investment in streetscapes, parks, public facilities, amenities, multi-mobility and utilities that may have otherwise not been completed, the tax base in the CRA has grown over 500% since its inception.

Historically, funds have been a 50/50 split between the city and county. This means the city retains funding for use on projects, programs and initiatives that may have otherwise been lost, delayed, or incomplete.

Q: HOW LONG HAS THE CITY OF WINTER PARK HAD A CRA AND WHAT AREA DID THE ORIGINAL CRA COVER?

A: The CRA was established in 1994 and was slightly expanded in 1999. It generally goes from Interlachen Avenue on the east, to Webster Avenue on the north, [US](#)

[Highway 17-92 \(Orlando Avenue\)](#) to the west, and Fairbanks Avenue to the south.

Q: WHAT WERE SOME OF THE PROJECTS/PROGRAMS FUNDED BY THE ORIGINAL CRA?

A: The CRA has funded several streetscape projects such as Park Avenue, New York Avenue, Pennsylvania Avenue, Orange Avenue, Denning Drive, New England Avenue and Webster Avenue, as well as supporting brick and road repairs throughout the district.

The CRA has funded all or a portion of several community facilities including, the Winter Park Library, the Winter Park Community Center, Welcome Center, Heritage Center, Central Park Main Stage Pavilion, Central Park/West Meadow Restrooms, Shady Park, MLK Unity Corner and the Community Playground enhancement.

In addition, the CRA has added 208 public parking spaces in the downtown area, contributed to over 75 business façade improvements projects, and provided funding for over 200 single and multifamily housing unit initiatives.

The CRA has supported several community partners such as the Welbourne Day Nursery, Depugh Nursing Home, Winter Park Playhouse, Hannibal Square Heritage Center, and Park Avenue District, which adds to the community and economic health.

Q: WHY DID THE CITY PURSUE AN EXTENSION AND EXPANSION OF THE CRA?

A: The existing CRA was scheduled to sunset in 2027, at which time the city would no longer have benefited from the county share of the tax revenue. The city recognized that the area of West Fairbanks from [US Highway 17-92](#) to I-4 and south to the Minnesota Avenue has many infrastructure needs, with no funding mechanism to address. An expansion of the CRA boundaries to cover that area, along with an extension of time to address the needs, would benefit both jurisdictions. Fortunately, the county agreed and granted the extension and expansion.

Q: WHAT PROJECTS ARE PLANNED NOW THAT THE EXTENSION/EXPANSION HAS BEEN GRANTED?

A: There is a huge need for a second left turn lane eastbound on Fairbanks Avenue at [US Highway 17-92](#). This funding will help make that happen. Similarly, this will fund a dedicated left turn lane both east and westbound on Fairbanks Avenue at Denning Drive. If you ever drive that stretch of Fairbanks Avenue you know what a challenge those intersection are because of a lack of dedicated left turn movements.

Approximately \$15 million in funding will also galvanize several flood prevention and stormwater projects within the CRA. These areas include Minnesota Avenue, Nicolet Avenue, Denning Drive, Comstock Avenue, Canton Avenue and Lyman Avenue. Considering the city's stormwater fund is only expected to generate \$1.9 million in capital funding for Fiscal Year 2026, the CRA has been a primary source of funding to advance stormwater projects that would otherwise take decades to complete. Many of these projects not only benefit areas within the CRA but also areas outside of the CRA such as Lake Killarney.

From an economic development standpoint, the funding will allow the expansion of

the wastewater system in the expansion area so that quality redevelopment of that area can take place. Currently, most of those commercial properties are on septic tanks.

Q: HOW MUCH COUNTY MONEY DO WE EXPECT THE CITY TO RECEIVE DURING THE EXTENSION PERIOD THAT CAN BE REINVESTED INTO THE CITY OF WINTER PARK?

A: Depending upon assumptions about the growth in taxable value over time, it is estimated that the city will get to retain \$60 - \$70 million in Winter Park tax revenue that would normally be sent to Orange County.

Q: SOME SAY THE CRA ONLY BENEFITS THOSE THAT LIVE WITHIN THE CRA. IS THAT ACCURATE?

A: No, it is not accurate. CRA funding has allowed for tremendous investment in the downtown core, so if you are a resident that has ever strolled down Park Avenue, spent time in our parks, or enjoyed many city facilities, then you have benefited from CRA funding.

If you look at the past and future projects listed above, you will see that all Winter Park residents have and will benefit from many of them. It is also important to note that without this funding source, most of these projects would never have happened.

Q: SOME HAVE ARGUED THE CRA HAS COST THE CITY \$80 MILLION, IS THAT TRUE?

A: No. This argument seems to be trying to say that restricting the spending eligibility area to the CRA only, somehow loses the benefit of these funds for city use. It is true that the funds can only be spent in the CRA area but those funds are also generated only by taxpayers within the CRA area. In fact, having a CRA is the opposite of losing access to funds, it's actually almost a doubling. By having a CRA, the city gets to keep the portion of property taxes that would normally be paid to Orange County and instead gets to invest them in the CRA area.

Q: WHAT WOULD HAPPEN IF THE CRA DIDN'T EXIST?

A: The CRA has long been the city's capital improvement arm in the downtown core of the city and has enabled a number of projects and initiatives to happen that would otherwise have taken funds from somewhere else or never happened at all. If the CRA went away, the city would lose about half of its \$8 million+ in annual funding to do projects. This would greatly reduce the city's ability to make improvements to roads, facilities, parks, stormwater, etc.

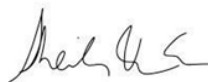
While it is true that CRA funding generated by the district must be spent in the district, this frees up other sources of revenue in the city to be used to dedicate to areas outside the CRA. If the city lost over \$4 million in annual funding, there would be a deficit that would likely make the downtown core now compete for funding priority with other areas in the city. To replace what is retained in Orange County tax revenue, would require an increase to the millage rate of just under half a point. Assuming that the need for infrastructure improvements would not go away, you could argue that the CRA has kept property taxes lower

For more information and a map of the CRA, please click

<http://cityofwinterpark.org/cra>.

Thank you, Randy for clarifying and explaining the CRA. Wishing everyone the best.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Sheila DeCiccio".

Sheila DeCiccio

Winter Park Mayor

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This newsletter is written by Winter Park Mayor Sheila DeCiccio to inform her constituents.
The views expressed are her own and are not intended to represent the entire WP Commission.