

Transcript

00:00:00 **Narrator**

You tuned into another edition of

00:00:02 **Narrator**

The Break Room.

00:00:03 **Narrator**

A weekly conversation about how the City of Saint Augustine works from those who do the work every day hosted by the City of Saint Augustine's communications director Melissa Wissel. The Break Room offers a closer look at the different city departments and provides updates on current and upcoming projects and events. And now your host, Melissa Wissel.

00:00:20 **Melissa Wissel**

Thanks for tuning in. I'm Melissa Wissel, communications director for the City of Saint Augustine.

00:00:26 **Melissa Wissel**

Back in June of 2023, city manager David Birchim expanded the Community Redevelopment Agency to include a neighborhood services division. It's an exciting and new initiative by the city and here to tell us about it is our very own neighborhood services and CR manager Jaime D Perkins. Jaime, welcome.

00:00:44 **Melissa Wissel**

Back.

00:00:44 **Jaime D. Perkins**

Hi, Melissa. Thank you for having me.

00:00:47 **Melissa Wissel**

I love having you on

00:00:47 **Melissa Wissel**

The Break Room.

00:00:49 **Jaime D. Perkins**

I love being on The Break Room I love. I love the work that we do together, and I love coming here and talking about it so.

00:00:55 **Melissa Wissel**

Let's get over the love fest and jump right in. Tell me about this new initiative, this new division, neighborhood services.

00:01:03 Jaime D. Perkins

Neighborhood services. So, I'm so excited to be appointed to this role. I think it's a great opportunity for our residents. We kind of juggled around like what is neighborhood services. What does that look like for the City of Saint Augustine?

00:01:17 Jaime D. Perkins

Residents and I think ultimately it boils down to neighborhood services being a hub for our residents and giving them a place where they can, you know, reach out to a sole area and get the information that they're looking for. And instead of them having to call, you know, say public works or utilities, if they have a question about a project or.

00:01:35 Jaime D. Perkins

If they have a planning question and they don't know exactly who to contact, they can reach out to neighborhood services and we can get them pointed in the right direction or get them in, connect them with whomever it is that they.

00:01:46 Jaime D. Perkins

Need to speak.

00:01:47 Melissa Wissel

To well, and a lot of our neighborhoods, one of the other pieces of this goes back to neighborhood grants, which is sort of another component of what you're going to be redefining.

00:01:52 Jaime D. Perkins

Yes.

00:01:58 Melissa Wissel

That, that, that program used to be in my department, we kind of did away with it. We tried to bring it back. There were questions as to what qualified, who qualified, how do we define it.

00:02:07 Jaime D. Perkins

Right.

00:02:08 Melissa Wissel

And the neighborhoods themselves really get excited about doing stuff within their neighborhood. Yeah, in their own.

00:02:16 Melissa Wissel

In their own little it's not HOA's, it's not, you know, a a a a development, if you will. But in their own right, they're defined. I'm I'm not going to go through and try to identify all of them but you know who you are.

00:02:32 **Melissa Wissel**

And I think it's a really exciting thing that we're actually bringing in and I think your area of what you work on with the CR A is a is a natural connection place for it to be housed.

00:02:43 **Jaime D. Perkins**

It is.

00:02:46 **Jaime D. Perkins**

Yeah. Yeah. So neighborhood grants is is a really great opportunity. I think our neighborhood associations and the organizations that represent.

00:02:52 **Jaime D. Perkins**

That specific neighborhoods are going to be really excited about what we're what we're going to be presenting to them. So the grant criteria is pretty much done right now. It's matriculating through our legal department because obviously we have to make sure that legally we're doing the right thing and then ultimately that, that grant criteria package will go before our city Commission.

00:03:13 **Jaime D. Perkins**

For them to put their stamp of approval on, or even, you know, maybe send me back and say, hey, make some changes, but hopefully they like what we've what staff has created and we look forward to getting the neighborhood grants back on the streets sometime in the spring.

00:03:27 **Melissa Wissel**

So two things I want to mention. So it sounds like there's going to be criteria and there's money involved, resources from the city and it's going to be something within the neighborhood. And then I'm going to also do a little plug here without even asking you. But if they want to have you come and talk to their neighborhoods.

00:03:34 **Jaime D. Perkins**

Yes.

00:03:36 **Jaime D. Perkins**

Exactly.

00:03:47 **Jaime D. Perkins**

Absolutely. So I've been to several Neighborhood Association meetings. I've met with the neighborhood council, and I'm available to meet with any Neighborhood Association Council or even organizations that are not necessarily neighborhood associations. I'm happy to meet with them and and provide the information they may be seeking. So.

00:04:05 **Jaime D. Perkins**

What we're proposing is a \$3000 maximum grant, so it's not a big grant, but it's something that organizations can, you know, kind of pull together and do what I would call a small project or maybe even the \$3000 is just like a supplement for other money that they have, maybe they're, you know, \$2500 short on a project or program that they're wanting to.

00:04:25 **Jaime D. Perkins**

Established within their neighborhood or community in the neighborhood, Grant could be used for.

00:04:33 **Melissa Wissel**

We also talked a little bit about something. I don't know if you've actually daylighted it, but we've talked about a little like Civic 101 or Government 101 and again.

00:04:45 **Melissa Wissel**

This is going to be something that really is directed at talking to the neighborhoods. I think we kind of try to do that when we have.

00:04:55 **Melissa Wissel**

We can speak or the city manager goes to speak and we try to get. I know Amy, our planning and building director Amy Skinner has gone and spoken to neighborhoods, but it sounds like what we've been talking about is maybe really trying to give a one-on-one on how to navigate the city.

00:05:03 **Jaime D. Perkins**

Right, right.

00:05:10 **Jaime D. Perkins**

Yeah. So when our city manager brought this neighborhood services to fruition, one of the words he kept using was streamlining. He wants to streamline things. And so I think the Civic 101 proposed.

00:05:25 **Jaime D. Perkins**

Program or initiatives. It hasn't been named yet, but so I'm using the word proposed, right. Yeah. So I think it's more of a streamline opportunity for residents and neighborhoods to have like a special space that they can come and learn. And it's not, you know, and I think we do a really good job of doing it now.

00:05:27 **Melissa Wissel**

Hasn't been named yet. OK, you gotta get with your brand. You gotta get with your branding. People talk about that.

00:05:45 **Jaime D. Perkins**

But just giving alternative options. So and there's there's other potential and proposed programming that we're kind of toying around with with neighborhood service.

00:05:53 **Jaime D. Perkins**

Neighborhood first initiative, we want to make sure that our residents know that you know our our, our residents that are here. Long term residents know that we care about them. So we want to have that program or or find out ways that we can initiate that and then we have a possible neighborhood resident program or new resident program I should call it for people who are new to our community.

00:06:13 **Jaime D. Perkins**

Because we have a lot of people coming here, so we want to give them some information and insight about who and what the city of Saint Augustine is and how they can navigate our government system. So we're looking at all kinds of things and neighborhood services where we can streamline what our residents, the information that they're receiving.

00:06:29 **Melissa Wissel**

Well, the idea of a of a.

00:06:31 **Melissa Wissel**

New resident welcome, you know, quarterly City Hall. Or maybe it's somewhere in the community. Maybe it's at the library, but I think something that.

00:06:40 **Melissa Wissel**

I'm seeing us collectively within the walls of City Hall is really making the effort to not only say that we are doing everything for our residents. I mean, you can't deny that we have visitors and tourists. But I think one of the things that we hear is they, our residents want to be the priority.

00:07:01 **Melissa Wissel**

Really trying to make sure that we're walking the walk, talking the talk and really making the residents the priority and what.

00:07:09 **Jaime D. Perkins**

Right.

00:07:09 **Melissa Wissel**

They're proposing and what's coming out of your office.

00:07:12 **Melissa Wissel**

Is just that.

00:07:13 **Jaime D. Perkins**

Exactly.

00:07:13 **Melissa Wissel**

So it's it's, it's wonderful if you're just tuning into The Break Room and Melissa Whistle, communications director for the city. And I have Jaime D Perkins with me. She is the city's neighborhood services and community redevelopment agency manager. I'm going to switch topics here.

00:07:30 Melissa Wissel

The time is flying by. We are talking. Just finished wrapping up a little bit of our discussion. Neighborhood services. I do want to have you come.

00:07:36 Melissa Wissel

Back and keep us up on what's happening with that, but let's talk a little bit about what the Community redevelopment areas are. You've talked about it before. We have two in place right now, but we're getting a third and I don't know if folks know about it and if they've heard about it, I want to make sure they're clear.

00:07:56 Melissa Wissel

This is a city CR a.

00:07:58 Jaime D. Perkins

Right. So.

00:07:59 Melissa Wissel

Because there is an area over.

00:08:00 Melissa Wissel

On the West side, that tells about this.

00:08:02 Jaime D. Perkins

We want to be specific so we so which city Community redevelopment area is a proposed area so.

00:08:08 Jaime D. Perkins

We don't know we.

00:08:09 Jaime D. Perkins

We're working to try to establish that and it's not to be confused with the West Augustine Community Redevelopment area, which?

00:08:14 Jaime D. Perkins

In the county, so the West City is going to be in Saint Augustine proper. If it's established, then right now we are matriculating through the process of wrapping up our findings of necessity study. I've hired a consultant to help us kind of collect that data to even determine if the West City area within these proposed boundaries that we've established.

00:08:36 Jaime D. Perkins

Even if it qualifies to be a CRA once that findings of necessity study is done.

00:08:42 Jaime D. Perkins

We bring that to our Commission for their review and if they like it and they say yes, these this data that you collected does show based off of what legislation says that we should be establishing a CR A, then we start building out our Community redevelopment plan and there's some really exciting opportunities for residents if that if we make it to that point.

00:09:01 Jaime D. Perkins

Where we could, you know, we'll be doing some community engagement, possibly establishing a steering committee that would help us kind of walk through the process of developing that, that CR a plan.

00:09:12 Melissa Wissel

And can you give me any insight as to why is the CR important? What what kind of benefit would that?

00:09:19 Melissa Wissel

Give West city. I mean it's.

00:09:21 Jaime D. Perkins

Right, right.

00:09:23 Melissa Wissel

I live in West City. I I would be excited to see what that means. What does.

00:09:27 Melissa Wissel

That mean for me?

00:09:27 Jaime D. Perkins

Yeah. So CRAs are empowered to do so many things. It's a special district where you know these where these special funds are sourced specifically for that area. So while you know our government city of Saint Augustine already does so many things within the city as far.

00:09:42 Jaime D. Perkins

Infrastructure is concerned. Those are things that obviously we have to do for quality of life for our residents. But CRAs are special because that money actually comes from within that community and it stays within that community. So it's empowered to do many things, obviously, with housing, special infrastructure or capital improvement projects.

00:10:02 Jaime D. Perkins

Business acquisition, special grants and programming that we can literally program into our CRA plan and introduce in that specific special district so.

00:10:11 **Melissa Wissel**

And if I if the.

00:10:13 **Melissa Wissel**

Yeah, has a need or let's say a rehabilitation project, or it's something for residents because you live in this designated area, you know, qualify for. Does it go up as high as federal or is it state?

00:10:30 **Jaime D. Perkins**

Yeah. So it, yeah, we didn't qualify for federal grants.

00:10:32 **Melissa Wissel**

But it's in that area, so it really opens up that area of town and repeating myself.

00:10:37 **Jaime D. Perkins**

Yeah. Yeah, it's a special funding, but areas vary. It's it's intentional and it's important that you specify that it's the Community redevelopment area.

00:10:45 **Jaime D. Perkins**

But it does open us up for special funding and and and dollars that otherwise we may not qualify for. So it kind of puts us on a it highlights that specific Community redevelopment area.

00:10:56 **Melissa Wissel**

And before we run out of time.

00:11:00 **Melissa Wissel**

Tell me a little bit. For example, we have a Lincolnville and a historic area CRA and we're doing a little bit new things down in the historic area too.

00:11:09 **Jaime D. Perkins**

Yeah, I'm so excited. So we just recently back in October, I'm sorry, in January our Commission adopted our Community redevelopment plan amendment. So we already had a plan, which is how we established or how our garage was.

00:11:23 **Jaime D. Perkins**

Built back in 2000 and 2006.

00:11:26 **Jaime D. Perkins**

I think it was.

00:11:27 **Jaime D. Perkins**

The construction was completed and since then we have been working on establishing the plan amendment which gives us a little bit of more time to work in the historic area on special CR projects. So we expanded the time frame to 2054. So now we have the.

00:11:43 Jaime D. Perkins

Era for another 30 years and then and this is the first year that we've actually seen a surplus in funding.

00:11:46 Melissa Wissel

My goodness.

00:11:52 Jaime D. Perkins

Above our debt service that we owe to pay down on the garage. So it was really important and imperative that we kind of build out the CRA plan now and we can program in the capital improvement projects with those additional dollars that we're going to see coming in as revenues for our HACRA. So we have a new plan which can be found on our CR a website.

00:12:12 Jaime D. Perkins

People want to read it and kind of see what that five point strategy looks like and how we plan to spend those dollars in the next 30 years.

00:12:20 Melissa Wissel

Well, I will say you just mentioned the website, it's City, Saint Augs CR A dot.

00:12:25 Jaime D. Perkins

Yeah.

00:12:26 Melissa Wissel

And be on the lookout for some changes we haven't really told anybody publicly yet, but we are working on a city uplift upgrade. They're facelift and the CRA we we saw that, we saw that little sneak peek and it looks amazing, very excited and but not only that.

00:12:36 Jaime D. Perkins

Yeah.

00:12:38 Jaime D. Perkins

The website redesigned.

00:12:42 Jaime D. Perkins

Yes, I'm.

00:12:43 Jaime D. Perkins

Tired, yeah.

00:12:46 Melissa Wissel

That information is on the web.

00:12:48 **Melissa Wissel**

Site there's so much exciting stuff going on and Lincolnville is still doing well and I do want to congratulate you. I don't know if we talked about it or if we did just give me a quick give me the quick minute 45 minute and a half of of your award for the.

00:13:08 **Melissa Wissel**

Ohh.

00:13:09 **Jaime D. Perkins**

Church. Yeah. So NE Regional Council awarded the Community Redevelopment Agency, City of Saint Augustine Community Redevelopment Agency for the historic preservation work that we did on First Baptist.

00:13:20 **Jaime D. Perkins**

Church was super excited to receive that recognition. You know, we we talk about all the great things that we're doing, but it's always wonderful when an outside entity or organization notices the work that you're doing. So we were awarded for our historic preservation and cultural preservation of First Baptist Church and.

00:13:39 **Jaime D. Perkins**

We did a lot of work over there. I think that project was about \$1.1 million for historic preservation and and putting those that that kind of an asset back into Lincolnville I think deserves the recognition so.

00:13:50 **Melissa Wissel**

And we did. We did a roof.

00:13:53 **Melissa Wissel**

With elevator window.

00:13:53 **Jaime D. Perkins**

Well, yeah. ADA Compliance historic preservation efforts related to window restoration. The the elevator was a heavy lift because we want to make sure that people have access. Yeah. You know, it gives it gives the Community access to a historic institution. We did some structural.

00:14:03 **Melissa Wissel**

Have you left?

00:14:13 **Jaime D. Perkins**

Stabilization. We want to make sure that these historic structures are around for years to come. So when you know you and I are no longer here, that those structures will continue to tell the story of the culture and history of that community.

00:14:25 **Melissa Wissel**

It's it's more than just a new coat of paint.

00:14:27 **Jaime D. Perkins**

Yeah, exactly.

00:14:28 **Melissa Wissel**

Well.

00:14:29 **Melissa Wissel**

Believe it or not, we are already out of time. You've got great stuff going on, Jaime. Again, thank you for coming. I love having you.

00:14:35 **Jaime D. Perkins**

I love being here with you, Melissa. I can't wait till I'm back again.

00:14:38 **Melissa Wissel**

We'll have you back again to tell us all the great things that are happening.

00:14:43 **Melissa Wissel**

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00:15:03 **Melissa Wissel**

Instagram and X at City Saint Aug thanks for tuning in until next time.

00:15:08 **Narrator**

You've been listening to The Break Room, a weekly program addressing projects and programs offered by the City of Saint Augustine. Join us each week as the city's communications director, Melissa Russell, has in-depth conversations with the people who make our town work to meet the needs of our community. See you at this time next week for another edition of the Breakers.