

Jaime D. Perkins, Neighborhood Services and CRA Manager, September 3, 2024

Narrator:

You've tuned in to another edition of the Break Room, a weekly conversation about how the city of St. Augustine works from those who do the work every day. Hosted by the city of St. 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.

Melissa Wissel:

Welcome to the break room. Thanks for tuning in. This week in studio, we are catching up with Jamie D. Perkins. She's our neighborhood services and CRA manager. There are lots of things happening. As always, Jamie, welcome back to the break room.

Jaime Perkins:

Hi, Melissa. Thank you for having me again.

Melissa Wissel:

Again. We're gonna start with West City CRA. It's officially a thing. Tell us about it.

Jaime Perkins:

Super exciting. So the West City Community redevelopment area has been established. Earlier this year, April, we established the CRA, and now we are in the process of developing our strategic plan, also known as the Community Redevelopment Plan, which basically highlights what we can and cannot do for redevelopment purposes in West City.

Melissa Wissel:

Sets goals, What you want to do.

Jaime Perkins:

Identifies challenges and how we can take care of those challenges and mitigate the issues that the residents and stakeholders are identifying. And the strategic plan will basically give us a guideline. It'll kind of be like our toolbox of what we can, what we can repair and redevelop in that area.

Melissa Wissel:

And when you talk about we, who is we? We have a committee, I believe

Jaime Perkins:

We do. I'm so excited. We actually have a great group of people. We have a steering committee or an advisory board of seven stakeholders from the West City community, business owners, residents, organization members that are stakeholders in West City. And they meet. We have, I think we have four meetings coming up, or actually, we had our first meeting back in August.

Melissa Wissel:

Excellent.

Jaime Perkins:

And we will meet again in October 10th, November.

Melissa Wissel:

...No time.

Jaime Perkins:

Yeah. Yeah. So October 10th, November 14th, and January 9th, all those meetings will be held at 05:00 p.m. in the Alcazar room. And basically what, though, that group of people will be doing, that committee is basically there to kind of help guide staff on what that redevelopment plan will entail.

Melissa Wissel:

And there's. Is it basically a document at the end, there's a finished product, a reference guide that says, here's the plan. This is what we're working on.

Jaime Perkins:

Exactly. So, and people who aren't familiar with the community redevelopment plan process, we have, of course, for all of our other CRAs, we also have identified plans. We just amended our historic area plan so they can kind of look at those for reference. But basically, this will be a complete document, a guidebook of all of the things that we want to accomplish through the redevelopment process in West City.

Melissa Wissel:

So if I live in West City and I want to know about this or I want to participate, I want to provide input. I'm going to tee you up here. Public meetings.

Jaime Perkins:

Absolutely. And we love public engagement. I think we do a really good job of keeping our residents informed and keeping them involved in listening to their feedback and accepting their input. So we do have an upcoming meeting for the west city stakeholders. It'll be September 10. It will be held at the historic Shiloh Baptist Church, which is actually remnant outreach now, which is located at 271 West King street. Very excited that I'm going to show appreciation to pastor Delphine Sands, who's allowing us to use her space. She's a great community partner, so we'll be there taking feedback from stakeholders. It'll be a very informal workshop where residents will be able to kind of walk around, give us notes on boards.

Melissa Wissel:

And that's what I was gonna ask you, is, are there gonna be boards or signs or pictures, posters? All kinds of stuff.

Jaime Perkins:

All kinds of things. And what we're looking for at this workshop is just an opportunity to get additional feedback for some of the framework that we've already laid out. So if we're talking about, hey, we need sidewalks in West City, well, we're looking for our stakeholders to come in and say, we need a sidewalk on this particular street and why, and then we can use that information to kind of identify how we mitigate that challenge for that particular sidewalk. Because even though we, you know, we are staff, we're doing the work, we don't live in these areas. We're not there every day. We don't have the same interactions that they have with their community. So we need them to tell us what the issues are so that we can repair them.

Melissa Wissel:

Have you met, or do you know who a lot of those neighbors are? Was there a big engagement process in establishing the CRA? And forgive me. Cause I do remember that we did this, and I remember that it happened. I live in West City, so I'm looking forward to it. So now I can actually participate as a resident. But, you know, I would imagine, you know who those folks are, but I would also imagine that this is a great opportunity if those of you who live in that area don't know, come to that meeting, it's a great time to meet you and the rest of the team. Will the committee be there?

Jaime Perkins:

So it gets a little bit muddy when we talk about having committee members there because of our sunshine laws. We have to make sure that they abide by the ethics committee terms and all those great things that our legislation puts in place, which is great because we want to make sure that we keep our board honest and that we value the integrity of their appointment. So they may be there, but they wouldn't be able to speak or provide any insight, but maybe just there to listen. I haven't had any feedback if they'll attend or not, but I do have several stakeholders that I've been in constant communication with, and I've had the opportunity to meet many people. And then with me being born and raised local, I

actually do have some interpersonal relationships with a lot of the people that live in that community. So they are not shy about telling me some of the things that they're.

Melissa Wissel:

Most of the residents that have opinions are not shy.

Jaime Perkins:

No.

Melissa Wissel:

And we appreciate the city.

Jaime Perkins:

Right. Right.

Melissa Wissel:

Well, that's awesome. That's great. If you're just now tuning in, you're listening to the break room. I'm Melissa Wissel, communications director. This week we're catching up with Jamie D. Perkins. She is our neighborhood services and CRA manager. We're talking mostly about CRA stuff. So let's come back across us one. Let's come back over to, I'm going to say downtown, but we're not going to talk about downtown. We're going to talk about Lincolnville.

Jaime Perkins:

Right.

Melissa Wissel:

Tell me what's going on with the CRA in Lincolnville.

Jaime Perkins:

So just for clarity, we do have two other CRAs in the city of St. Augustine. So the historic area CRA, which we look forward to accomplishing some great projects in that area in the upcoming budget year. And then we have the Lincolnville community redevelopment area, which is just right around the corner from that historic area CRA. And Lincolnville has just been one of our most active CRAs, and it's an exciting community to work in right now. We're doing some massive recreation improvements, which I'm extremely excited about because it's capital improvement, where our residents actually will get full on benefit from that and the dollars that we're spending. One of the most exciting things that we're doing right now is the improvement of our sports courts down in Lincolnville at the Eddy Vickers park, it has sat kind of dilapidated for years. Our residents were really frustrated by it. So I know that they're going to be extremely excited to see the improvements and be able to go out and use that space safely and enjoy just some family time.

Melissa Wissel:

So I'm going to give a shout out to this progress to you and the agency and the development that you have, because there are other projects we've been talking about in the city that have been going on for years. We have yet to put a shovel in the ground. And when you and I were walking here, you told me you got like a fence up and there's stuff there. I can go down there and see it.

Jaime Perkins:

It's almost ready to go, so, you know, it can be challenging. I have a few projects that have been tabled for several years, so it really does feel good to finally get one constructed and ready to go. It's a really great feeling, because sometimes it takes a long time to get.

Melissa Wissel:

You got a lot more coming. But the fact that you were able to get this piece, you know, it's happening.

Jaime Perkins:

It will be usable here very soon. So we do still have some fencing up where we're asking residents to kind of give us a little more time to finish up the small elements. We want to make sure that it's completely safe, it's completely user friendly when they go out. So it's not open yet. We will be doing a soft launch, and then we'll have a great big grand opening. I'm hoping we can get some residents on the pickleball courts and on the basketball courts to identify that grand opening. We'll cut some ribbon, and I'll actually be needing to work with you, Melissa, so you can help me with that ceremony piece.

Melissa Wissel:

Maybe we can. Okay, I'm gonna think out loud here. Maybe we can do some type of, like, sign up and there could be, like, the first teams.

Jaime Perkins:

You're in my head, because we actually have already been talking about that in neighborhood services and CRA.

Melissa Wissel:

Yeah, it has to be a drawing or something, or has to be something random, but that would be really fun.

Jaime Perkins:

Yeah, I would love to do that.

Melissa Wissel:

Yeah, there needs to be some theme.

Jaime Perkins:

We need a little theme or something. I think that would be great. And even get city staff involved, but I think it would be a great opportunity, and it's just gonna be a great

recreational space. I see so many people walking through Lincolnville and other parts of the city with their basketball or even pickleball is such a huge sport right now. It's gonna be a great opportunity for people to get out there, get some exercise, get moving around, and just be active.

Melissa Wissel:

Well, and we've also, I haven't had Corey Niles on to talk about it, but the Gallimore is getting a huge facelift. So to have that space renovated, beautiful, and then bring in this recreation facilities and all the other stuff.

Jaime Perkins:

And all the other elements. So the dog park coming online, our kayak launch, upgrades to our playground, to our little ones, our little residents and stakeholders will have somewhere to enjoy. It's just an exciting piece, so I'm looking forward to it.

Melissa Wissel:

We'll keep our listeners posted, and I will have you back, and we'll talk about. But we still have a few more minutes. What else did we want? We had one other thing to talk about.

Jaime Perkins:

Well, we were still doing Hayling park, too, which is also in connection to this great master plan down at Eddie Vickers and Hayling. It's kind of a combination recreation improvement over 25 acres of recreational space just in Lincolnville alone in the Lincolnville CRA. So one of the things I'm really looking forward to with hayling, it will continue to be a passive recreational space. You know, you'll be able to walk and kind of sit and enjoy your family time there and get great views, of course. Cause we all know hayling has the best views. But the Hayling plaza is coming online, and we are gonna get an opportunity to honor doctor Robert B. Haley, who the park is named for with a statue. So I'm really looking forward to that. Initially, we were hoping to get the statue unveiled and before his 95th birthday in November, but I think with project challenges, they come. Our timeline may be pushed out a bit, but we really look forward to having that happen sometime early next year, if not toward the end of this calendar year.

Melissa Wissel:

And having seen the model, the scale model of it, it's going to be quite impressive.

Jaime Perkins:

I think so, and we have photos of that. If any of the listeners are interested in seeing the master plan or seeing what the model of the statute looks like, all of that is available on our CRA website. We try to make sure we post as much information as possible so we can keep our stakeholders and residents informed about what's happening in our CRAs.

Melissa Wissel:

And in our last two minutes that we have. You have an anniversary coming up in 2025 because we don't celebrate anniversaries around here at all.

Jaime Perkins:

Like what anniversary?

Melissa Wissel:

100th 200th.

Jaime Perkins:

450, 455.

Melissa Wissel:

So tell us about. This is a young anniversary. Something that we've actually witnessed in our lifetime.

Jaime Perkins:

Exactly. In mine. And that doesn't happen very often because I am very much a young person. So redevelopment 25, our CRA, is turning 25 years old. Our first CRA, which is the historic area. CRA, formerly known as the historic Transportation and Parking Community Redevelopment Area, was first established in year 2000, which is what created our community redevelopment agency, and next calendar year will be 25 years. So we're looking for opportunities to celebrate this wonderful occasion of redevelopment and what that does for public benefit in our communities and our CRAs. And we'll be hopefully hosting some great events and having our residents come out and just enjoy the public benefit of having a redevelopment agency in the city of St. Augustine.

Melissa Wissel:

Well, and like you said, the. What was it, the hat. The historic area. Transportation. It's the historic area cra.

Jaime Perkins:

Right.

Melissa Wissel:

It's been renamed. To encompass a little bit more of that area and to give it a little bit broader scope.

Jaime Perkins:

Exactly.

Melissa Wissel:

But the celebration will address all of those.

Jaime Perkins:

Exactly. Because it's the agency, not any particular area.

Melissa Wissel:

I'm thinking, I'm just, again, thinking out loud here. I'm picturing some montage videos over the years, maybe some pictures, some stuff on the website.

Jaime Perkins:

This is all your wheelhouse communications director. I can't wait to coordinate with you.

Melissa Wissel:

I'm going to ask you one last quick question, and I don't know if you're going to give me a look across the microphones, but how are we doing on the park?

Jaime Perkins:

Which park?

Melissa Wissel:

The twine park.

Jaime Perkins:

Lincolnville Park.

Melissa Wissel:

Lincolnville park.

Jaime Perkins:

Lincolnville park in honor of George and Ollie Smith. Thank you. We'll be opening, I'm hoping, toward the end of this month or early October. We'll have also a ribbon cutting for that. A ribbon cutting ceremony. We're just about done. We're actually in the landscaping phase and getting the outer wall complete so that we'll be done here very soon. It's such a nice space. And pocket parks are so essential to neighborhoods like Lincolnville. So.

Melissa Wissel:

Great. Well, I was afraid you were gonna say, oh, yeah, we hit a snag, and that's not, so. I'm really glad to hear that.

Jaime Perkins:

No, it's coming along beautifully.

Melissa Wissel:

So stay tuned. We'll have that ribbon cutting soon and scheduled and get that information out. And we've run out of time, so lots of great stuff.

Jaime Perkins:

I'll be back.

Melissa Wissel:

I love having you on because the stuff you do is so uplifting and it's positive and it's happening.

Jaime Perkins:

I agree. I love what we do in the CRa.

Melissa Wissel:

You're doing a great job.

Jaime Perkins:

Thank you, Melissa. That means a lot.

Melissa Wissel:

And your staff.

Jaime Perkins:

Yes. Jill Collins, shout out to Jill. She's great.

Melissa Wissel:

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Narrator:

The Break Room, a weekly program addressing projects and programs offered by the city of St. Augustine. Join us each week as the city's communications director, Melissa Wissel, 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 break room.