

The Break Room with Jaime D. Perkins, Community Services Director, August 12, 2025 – Part 1

Narrator:

You tuned in to another edition of *The Break Room*. 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.

Melissa Wissel:

Welcome to *The Break Room*, thanks for tuning in. We are back in the studio this week with Jaime D. Perkins, Community Services Director. She's got an update on our recent Cordova Street improvements public meeting, community response to our Redevelopment 25! efforts, and we have an upcoming Fountain of Youth Elks Lodge ribbon cutting ceremony, Jaime, welcome back.

Jaime D. Perkins

Hi Melissa, thank you for having me again.

Melissa Wissel:

Again. I was looking at the calendar, it's been a little over a month and at the time you had just taken over. Or taken on, I should say, a new department that was created community services. So, before we jump into all of the little details, give me a quick how's it going.

Jaime D. Perkins

It's going great, yes, I am very busy. Lots of meetings, lots of getting to know my staff and colleagues. Many of the people I've worked with, obviously before we have a very close-knit set of people here at the city great, great working staff, but I haven't worked with them in this capacity so. Getting to know them and in this transitional phase of implementing

Community Services has been great. It's been really informative and I'm just I'm loving the new opportunity.

Melissa Wissel:

I'm excited because now they meaning those divisions we talked about I'm not going to name them because I'll probably forget someone, but you and I were talking they were under Ruben being Assistant City Manager was off doing Assistant City Manager duties which is great, so I love that they now do have a director you've got that closer connection with those divisions and I like it because you and I get to work more together.

Jaime D. Perkins

Right, yeah, we are closer so I will I'm just so the public can have a better idea of what Community Services is and all of this is on our city website you do a great job in Communications of making sure you keep our constituents informed. But under Community Services we have obviously the CRA, our Community Redevelopment Agency, Neighborhood Services which were divisions I was already managing, and then I've taken on Mobility and Parking Enforcement, the Parking Garage, which is all in the Mobility we have Events and Special Events and then we also have our homeless our Community Outreach which is also under Community Services now so pretty hefty lift but I mean like I said everyone in those, in their respective divisions have already been doing such great work so I'm just loving the opportunity to get to know more about what they do. And how we can keep using our services to make our city better.

Melissa Wissel:

And like you said, they're great staff, all those division supervisors just now have a little bit closer connection of guidance and oversight which is fantastic, so we'll come back and talk about some of that other stuff this week like we talked about. We've had our recent. Cordova Street improvements public meaning you've had a couple. we've been meeting a lot about Cordova street yeah.

Jaime D. Perkins

we've been meeting a lot about Cordova street yeah.

Melissa Wissel:

Tell us what why Cordova street.

Jaime D. Perkins

Well, it is the I like to say it's kind of the heart of our city, you know it's the boundary of our town plan and it is a very emotional project that I think because of the historic significance of Cordova street and what it means to the tenure and the historic integrity of our of our city. So, Cordova street it hasn't been improved in this way in a very long time so it's definitely time for us to address some of the mobility challenges related to pedestrian safety vehicular traffic things of that nature, so we wanted we wanted to one start off with what we're doing now which is a conceptual design. And we reaching out to our public like we always do to get feedback of what it is that they want to see on their streets and how they want their tax dollars to be spent and what's the best way to do that and so we've been reaching out to the public we've had an on-site workshop which was extremely well attended that was our very first one I think over 60 people came down and visited our tent near the VIC that was really cool it was so cool it was really nice our consultant did a great job of helping us get that implemented and getting all those. People there and then we had another public workshop at the Government House which was also well attended and then this last workshop that we just recently completed was I think we had over 20-25 people there and we kind of changed our target market a bit so before we were reaching out to people who were specifically in our HACRA or historic area CRA because the funds that we'll use to fund the Cordova street improvement are coming specifically from the CRA so we will kind of targeting those people in that specific boundary. Yeah, but it was brought to my attention that there's a great impact of our Flagler Model Land Constituents and our Flagler College residents and people that attend the Grace Methodist Church those stakeholders, so we wanted to make sure that we included them in the process so while everyone from the community of course is invited because this is a public street not just a the CRA street. We did target those particular areas, and we had a great turn out and they offered extra. Dream impressive feedback for us to use as we move on through the conceptual stage.

Melissa Wissel:

Cordova street is really folks aren't familiar with the name of that said street is really that main artery parallel to Saint George right drive down it and it's it to me it's a funny intersection. Because I've I lived in Davis shores for many years, and you come across and that's where you can take that left turn without stopping right but the people that are coming through Cordova don't necessarily know and then the stop sign but it is a really, it's a main thoroughfare and it's a.

Jaime D. Perkins

They don't realize that this is stop sign.

Melissa Wissel:

I would dare say a cut through and in some respects so it it's bumpy it's not well paved it's there's always there seems to be construction utility poles FPL 's out there a lot right a lot going on. On that street.

Jaime D. Perkins

So the locals call it the cut through or backroad I like to call all the side streets that like I think nobody knows about like this is our little back road that we can you know easily move through the city and not have to deal with a whole lot of traffic but there are some challenges so even with the pedestrian piece we want to make sure that our constituents are safe I think that's one of the biggest things and so if you're walking on the sidewalk down Cordova street there are sections of the street where 2 people can't walk on the sidewalk or where the sidewalk is you know it's dilapidated state and so we want to fix that. We just want to make sure that everybody can safely enjoy the city get through and get to where they're going without you know the concern of you know being injured or hurting somebody exactly.

Melissa Wissel:

Stepping up stepping off the sidewalk or tripping off the sidewalk or what not. Is there a timeline So what are the next steps for this improvement project.

Jaime D. Perkins

or having to walk in the street because there is no sidewalk. Right so we don't have a real timeline as far as from concept to completion if that's the question but as far as the concept we plan to be done by the end of the fiscal year which is September 30th so we hope to have a conceptual design that we can share with the public and say this is the inspiration of how we want to move forward with. With designing actual construction documents and so the next step would be complete the conceptual design get that out on the on the public so they can see what we're what our thoughts are what our direction would be and then we would move into the design stage which is where we would hire Engineers to start designing what we have conceptually come up with and so that's the next steps and that that can it can take some time it's a very you know in depth project it's not something that's going to happen overnight but I like the fact that at least we're starting.

Melissa Wissel:

Well, it keeps the discussion open, and it lets the community know. These things do take time but we're working on it right and you know it may not be in the next year, but it'll be in the next couple of years that we see it.

Jaime D. Perkins

Right.

Melissa Wissel:

Actually, come to fruition. Exactly well if you're just now tuning in, you're listening to *The Break Room* I'm Melissa Wissel Communications Director for the city of Saint Augustine and I have Jaime D. Perkins in studio this week. Is our community services director just wrapping up the last Cordova street improvements piece of that puzzle let's talk a little bit about Redevelopment 25! and I also want to make sure actually I'm going to I'm going to change up that I'm going to ask you to talk about the Elks Lodge. Ribbon cutting oh. Yeah, because that we can come back another time and talk about Redevelopment 25! that's still going on.

Jaime D. Perkins

We can talk about we can. We but.

Melissa Wissel:

Wait yeah but we're gonna keep talking we only Have a couple minutes left.

Jaime D. Perkins

So, the institutional rehab is an excellent program that is through our Lincolnville CR, so everyone knows we have 3 CRA's very different in in the need so we established programming based off of what the need of those specific areas are, and we have the? Institutional rehab program in Lincolnville which addresses the rehabilitation of historic structures typically institutions and the Elks Lodge, Fountain of Youth Elks Lodge is our 3rd I believe or maybe even our 4th there's so many I'm losing count now I was like yeah.

Melissa Wissel:

Churches have primarily we've done churches.

Jaime D. Perkins

Well not churches, institutions to this point we yes that is correct we we've done this is our first non-religious institution and so most of the money for this project actually is came from the state it was a state grant the African American cultural and Historic grant we went out wrote a grant.

Melissa Wissel:

But up to this point. Primarily OK.

Jaime D. Perkins

Got about 890 \$1000.00 the city invested the rest. It's a 1.3-million-dollar project and we are finally done it's been a few years it's been about 2 and a half 3 years of us designing and

then ultimately completing the construction but the facilities the institution is completely rehab now it's beautiful its ADA compliant and we want to celebrate that by doing a ribbon cutting ceremony. We didn't end up doing groundbreaking when we started the project so now that we're at the end we're inviting the public to come out on August 19th at 10:00 AM 100 Washington street. Our mayor will be there, and we're going to cut the ribbon and allow people to do a self-guided tour so they can see one how their tax dollars are working and also the great work that we're doing in our Lincolnville CRA.

Melissa Wissel:

The one thing that's most noticeable and of course it's because it's on the outside is there's no more staircase yeah. And there's a balcony have a yeah and what.

Jaime D. Perkins

Yeah

Melissa Wissel:

What else was part of the project?

Jaime D. Perkins

So, it was on, so the project itself was mainly structural in nature we did some flood mitigation because it has that building has flooded before which is where a lot of the issues started with the Elks Lodge unfortunately and what we try to do is we want to preserve these historic structures, and we have to figure out ways to fight against the elements that we don't have control over. So, we did flood mitigation. Efforts stabilization of the structure there was a lot of MEP stuff which is like our mechanical and electrical I think the building was working on some very old electricity wiring system, so we went in and mitigated and changed those so that it's a safe building new HVAC painting and flooring. Everything we went in and it's just it's almost like a completely brand-new building and.

Melissa Wissel:

It was built in the 50s.

Jaime D. Perkins:

Yeah, and there's a member. Yeah, some number block. Room there's a member, actually everyone knows Miss Cora Tyson and we did a walk through with the members. Those and some of the other stakeholders a couple weeks ago and Miss Cora Tyson was there shout out to Miss Cora. If you're listening and she's a jewel in our community and she said I was here with the first block was laid for the first building and it was very emotional for me to be a part of something like that and for her to understand and recognize you know the investment because of where she saw the building you know when it was first established to what it became into what it is now so I think that's just a really good.

Melissa Wissel:

That's crazy there's not a lot of people around that can say they were here when that when any first brick was laid.

Jaime D. Perkins:

Exactly right not a historic building no and we've done a great job of preserving just some of the really significant details of the structure of the jealousy windows which are extremely famous because of that photo of Doctor Martin Luther King and.

Melissa Wissel:

Yeah.

Jaime D. Perkins

Dr. Robert B. Hayling that they would hold a press conference is there for during the 1964 Civil Rights movement, so there's this famous photo of Dr. King sitting there with Dr. Hayling and Robert Abernathy and so we preserved those windows we were able to work with the window restoration company and restored a lot all of the jalousie windows on the second floor so it was just great and we worked really closely to I have to say Julie Courtney our Historic Preservation Officer she does an excellent job for us and making sure that we

are. Being doing what we should do as far as the preservation yeah so, we appreciate that and so she was a huge part of that too so.

Melissa Wissel:

Right. Great well I'm going to say we need to have you come back.

Jaime D. Perkins

You always say that.

Melissa Wissel:

Yeah. But we know and here we are, but we do have to have you come back because I don't have enough time to really talk about Redevelopment 25! and I do want to talk about it you've had 2 out of 3 activities so far and I would like to have you come back talk about it. About how they've been what's coming up and yes.

Jaime D. Perkins

Can you just say the date for the upcoming one just in case October 9th right will be at the VIC for the historic area CRA so we've already done one city we had a successful Lincolnville CRA Redevelopment 25! in our last one will be in the HACR a we'll have more details to come but just mark your calendar. October 9th 5:00 PM at the VIC.

Melissa Wissel:

And, Thursday, August 19th at 10:00 for the Elks Lodge ribbon.

Jaime D. Perkins

Is that a Thursday I think that's a Tuesday?

Melissa Wissel:

I don't know. It's the 19th it's the 19th of August and it's at 10:00 AM at 100 Washington yes so come on down for that and then tune back into *The Break Room* to hear the rest of the story yes alright we're going to wrap it up.

Jaime D. Perkins:

Thanks Melisa

Melissa Wissel:

If you missed part of this broadcast and want to go back and listen from the beginning check out this broadcast and our past broadcast a complete listing of our platforms where you can find the podcast at CityStAugRadio.com we want to keep you informed about what's happening in and around the city and that you hear it hear from the people who make it happen every day follow us on our social media you'll find us on Facebook Instagram and X @CityStAug until next time thanks for tuning in.

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 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*.