

Jaime D. Perkins, Community Services Director, August 19, 2025 – Part 2

Narrator:

You've 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 I'm Melissa Wissel communications director for the city of Saint Augustine.

Melissa Wissel:

Last week we had Jaime D. Perkins in studio, she's our community services director. We talked about Cordova Street improvements, we talked about the Elks Lodge ribbon cutting, and we did not get a chance to talk about Redevelopment 25 so Jaime, we're going to get right back to it. Welcome back.

Jaime D. Perkins:

Thank you for having me Melissa. We're going to talk.

Melissa Wissel:

I hope people don't get tired of listening to our conversations..

Jaime D. Perkins:

I was going to say the same thing.

Melissa Wissel:

Because we have really fun conversations and I love interviewing you you're fun to talk to I love what you do you do so many great things for the community. Your divisions do great things for our community, so it's an easy conversation for you and I to have.

Jaime D. Perkins:

I'm so glad you said you took the words out of my mouth I was going to say hey listeners if you ever get sick of hearing me on here. Shoot me an e-mail, shoot an e-mail to Melissa and tell her to stop featuring that Lady on here, we're tired of hearing.

Melissa Wissel:

I'm sure they'll blow up our social media and Rachel will have a heyday with that on. So so let's talk Redevelopment 25. It's the community redevelopment agency we have 3 areas take it away.

Jaime D. Perkins:

Yeah so we're turning 25 years old and that's really the basis for the celebration so I was just kind of going through our annual reports when one year and realized like oh wow our first CRA was established in 2000 we're coming up on 25 years and I'm looking back at all the great things that we've done. Initially starting with our our parking garage the visitor Information Center and downtown historic parking garage which is our very first CRA project ever. The HACRA is our very first CRA and I'm using acronyms but historic area community redevelopment area and in the turning 25 years old and since the establishment of the HACRA we've established the Lincolnville CRA and we've established West City CRA and I thought it was something that was worth celebrating and acknowledging the work that we've done in in these special districts. And there's a lot of CRA 's throughout the state of Florida. I am very much. I toot our own horn I you know I think we do a great job I think a lot of CRAs in the state of Florida do a great job, but I think we do an excellent job of what we do. To you know accelerate economic development in our communities, preserve affordable housing, create affordable housing, preserve historic you know create historic preservation efforts. We do a lot of great work and I wanted to celebrate that for our 25th year anniversary.

Melissa Wissel:

And that's why I was going to ask you to rewind even to explain what is a historic excuse me what. Is a community redevelopment agency right? It's a it's a legislatively.

Jaime D. Perkins:

Yeah yeah.

Melissa Wissel:

And you you explain it.

Jaime D. Perkins:

So so so an agency is actually the the individuals that oversee. They're like our government board which is ultimately in our in our situation our commissioners. So so mayor Nancy Sikes-Kline is our agency board chair and and they oversee the work that we do. They they kind of the final decision-making authority and not kin of, they are the final decision making authority for the work that we do. So CRA 's are technically special districts that are legislatively approved. We have to go out do a finding of necessity to determine if a specific area meets the criteria the state-identify criteria to become a CRA. And if the if it does then we go out and we develop a CRA plan which is basically like a comp plan for that special district and in that plan we talk about ways that we're going to address the findings that we found in the finding of necessity study and how we plan to mitigate some of the issues and challenges that we found.

Melissa Wissel:

And what are some of those criteria to be an agency or to set an area.

Jaime D. Perkins:

Lack of affordable housing, Safety challenges, community policing issues. I mean blight, vandalism. Blight and slum are legislative terms this in our they specifically call it out in our in our legislation and call it slum and blight where it could be relative to vacant properties

and parcels dilapidated structures. Lack of pedestrian connectivity and mobility issues and and we meet a lot of those criterias in in the downtown area we met that with our parking and transportation elements where you know just really wasn't safe or we had challenges with mobility so our HACR came online as a transportation and parking HACR which is how we got the parking garage built. To try to create mitigate some of that traffic circumstance in our downtown corridor or core area.

Melissa Wissel:

And I think there was concern back in the day that they were gonna have trouble filling it.

Jaime D. Perkins:

We don't have that problem.

Melissa Wissel:

Well I wonder if people will use it?

Jaime D. Perkins:

We need another garage we need a couple more of those things.

Melissa Wissel:

Yeah it's another day's conversation. Yeah but then we also so then we have Lincolnville

Jaime D. Perkins:

Lincolnville came in 2013 so we so 2000 was the HACRA. Lincolnville was established in 2013 and and we know the challenges that Lincolnville faced many years ago and and what that community has become. Not all great you know and some people, there were challenges with the development of that community, but we we're working to try to mitigate some of those circumstances and then as recently as 2024 we established the West City CRA. So and and just clarifying there are other CRA 's in the county we have three in the city

and those are the ones that I manage. So we have three CRA's in the city and those are the ones that were responsible for.

Melissa Wissel:

If you're now just tuning in we are back in studio with Jamie Perkins. She's our community services director. I'm Melissa Wissel communications director. We're talking about Redevelopment 25, the importance of community redevelopment agencies throughout the state and our areas we have 3. And we've had 2 celebrations excuse me. Give me a quick recap give our listeners a quick recap of our West City and our Lincolnville and then tell us about what we've got coming in October.

Jaime D. Perkins:

Absolutely, so and back in March we celebrated the West city CRA for redevelopment 25 and we actually did it in partnership with the West king market which happens I think it's the 3rd Wednesday of the month. And.

Melissa Wissel:

Or yeah so so it's at the. West king Wednesday is West king I think I'm not sure.

Jaime D. Perkins:

Yes, West King Wednesday when I think it's the 3rd Wednesday and if I got it wrong I'm really sorry but it's a great opportunity for people to get out in the in the community in the West city area. And just you know patronize all the businesses that are there and they set up a market so we kind of did them in partnership with that. We set up a tent, we had a live band shout out to Cholula, my classmate Chase Rodman is the lead singer there and it was great working with him on that project on that event. And we we give away free pizza and drinks and we set education opportunity we show our plan and talk. And ask and answer questions from our constituents and stakeholders to talk about what we're doing and what the plans are for West City so well attended we had a great time. Fast forward to just here in the past July we were in Lincolnville under the oak trees and at the sound stage at Saint Benedict the Moor it was a wonderful celebration. It was hot.

Melissa Wissel:

For as hot as it was it was actually tolerable because it was under the trees it was so nice.

Jaime D. Perkins:

We had members of the Cats Downstairs which is another local band. They they perform regionally actually so they came out and they performed we gave away free pizza drinks cupcakes again there was raffle tickets and prizes the same as in West city and I really want to thank all of the sponsors and people businesses that donated to our raffles because we we kind of spin the wheel and you get to win these great prizes.

Melissa Wissel:

And the photo booth is so fun.

Jaime D Perkins:

And the photo the photo booth is so fun it is so funny you get to get your pictures right on the spot so it's a memory created immediately. and we also get to save those pictures to share you know throughout the CRA so we have those a copy of those too but you get a handheld. Hard copy.

Melissa Wissel:

Old old fashioned actually a piece of like a film strip yeah yeah.

Jaime D. Perkins:

yeah it's actually a piece of it reminds me of being in the mall remember in the mall you would Take pictures back In in that little booth and that's basically what you get is really cool and and now we're looking forward to the HACRA celebration. This is our 3rd and final opportunity to celebrate the 25 years of community redevelopment in the City of St. Augustine. we look forward to doing that on October 9th we don't have our band solidified yet so we'll have more information but we will have live music we'll have pizza we'll have drinks we'll have cupcakes and there will be prizes to give away the same as on the other 2

celebrations and we it's open to the public not just to our CRA stakeholders but to anybody. In the in the city that wants to attend have a good time and learn about what we do in the CRA we invite you out 5:00 PM.

Melissa Wissel:

Ride your bikes.

Jaime D Perkins:

Ride your bike

Melissa Wissel:

Bring your car and park in the garage. Register your car if you're a Saint Johns county resident, park for \$3.00.

Jaime D. Perkins:

We have the residential parking that is we've we've always had residential parking but we were previously using park now cards.

Melissa Wissel:

Sp let's parlay right into that so that we're going to tie off the redevelopment 25 on this conversation. So mentioning the park now cards you don't use a Park Now Card In the garage. but if you register your car you get in for the \$3.00. But the big news is park Now cards.

Jaime D. Perkins:

They're going away. bye bye park now so I the park now implementation was before my time but I know it was it was great when it was working and and it was perfect for that time frame but we've transitioned away from that. September 30th is the absolute last time that you can use it and we'll no longer have it in effect. We are asking residents if you have a Park

Now Card and you have a balance on it you can bring it in to our customer service department and we'll give you your money back you.

Melissa Wissel:

Get a refund yeah. But the discount is not going away that's right.

Jaime D. Perkins:

The discount doesn't go away just the cards.

Melissa Wissel:

And if you use a mobile app and your mobile phone friendly go ahead and download the app it's parkStAug you go on to Google or Android Google or apple.

Jaime D. Perkins:

Iphone.

Melissa Wissel:

Apple store and get your ParkStAug mobile app. You don't have to use the mobile app but it is helpful particularly if you park you go to lunch you're shopping you're down the other end of town, gives you a little notification.

Jaime D. Perkins:

And you can extend.

Melissa Wissel:

Your can extend your time but most importantly really what we want to remind folks is that the discount is not being discontinued just the card as a form of payment and the last topic I want to make sure we cover today is neighborhood grants

Jaime D Perkins:

Oh yeah.

Melissa Wissel:

That's still your oversight you're still managing that.

Jaime D. Perkins:

Absolutely.

Melissa Wissel:

But we ran out of money.

Jaime D. Perkins:

We did.

Melissa Wissel:

Which is a good problem to have.

Jaime D. Perkins:

It's a great problem to have yeah so we we funded several grants in this fiscal year to the point that we could not open up our grant cycle in July and so we were able to fund several projects don't ask me to list them because it was so many I we I think we put it in news and notes though which is great so if you want to know the applicants that were awarded \$3000.00 or less it's it's in a previous news and notes or yeah if you can go back and look at that. We we awarded some really great projects it's so great to see the communities come together and come like find a cause that they're all like you know passionate about and then go after these grants and then they actually implement them themselves because the

neighborhood grant program. It's it's their baby we are there to offer like technical assistance but we technically just give you the money if you get approved and and you go off on your own and you and you implement these great community projects programs events and so we've had some really great ones come across our desk.

Melissa Wissel:

Can I put you on the spot? Do you remember what a couple of them are tell the agency or the entity. Because they're creative they're really creative.

Jaime D. Perkins:

Yeah they are so so I do know that Lincolnville won a grant for it was actually it's a historic Lincolnville historic preservation and restoration society won a grant to help fund some of the efforts of the Lincolnville, Lincolnville festival which is coming up in November. They have it's an annual event it's been going on since like the 70s so we funded a portion of that I think we were their music sponsor. Ravenswood I'm I'm just outdone with the work that they've done they actually initiated a community cleanup event and the way they wrote their grant it was for three events. 3 clean up opportunities but it was under one grant application so they are going out and actually doing trash cleanup and and investing back in their community and you know organizing and they also did a Ravenswood one a separate period because you can apply twice as long as it's you can only max out at 3,000. So, you can apply multiple times. But you can only get \$3,000 a fiscal year and they did a like a community dinner which was an opportunity for them to come together and learn about what's happening in their community get to know each other which is great. Who else I mean there were just so many really great ones I can't I can't remember the model some of our community gardens have one I think Lighthouse Park the community garden, Lincolnville community garden got some money to do some improvements I mean and they're investing back in their community and that's what this neighborhood grant is all about.

Melissa Wissel:

You're you're right there with me. So if I'm sitting listening and I'm thinking in my neighborhood or maybe it doesn't have to be in the neighborhood though right it does it has it could be a community group it could be an organization but they have to be.

Jaime D. Perkins:

Formally or informally organized groups can come together and and so.

Melissa Wissel:

In the city limits.

Jaime D. Perkins:

Correct it has to be within, the work has to be within the city municipality boundaries it doesn't have to be you know we have all of our identified neighborhoods like Lincolnville and Flagler Model land or Uptown or you know. Davis Shores

Melissa Wissel:

Old City South.

Jaime D. Perkins:

Old city South. It doesn't have to be in those specific neighborhoods that I mean those neighborhood associations can apply but as long as the work that's being done is within the city. Limits you are open to apply and it has to be a nonprofit organization of 3 or more people.

Melissa Wissel:

OK and we're talking about this because we ran out of money like you said it was awarded so when can folks apply again? When should they be on the lookout of when they can apply?

Jaime D. Perkins:

October one. So our new fiscal year starts and that's the start of our new grant cycle our application acceptance period will begin October 1st. Applications are due by October 15th at 5:00 PM. And the review process will begin from there and we we get a small budget every year so once those funds are expended then we don't open any additional grant cycles. If we don't expend the funds all in October then there will be other opportunities to apply October, April, January. I'm sorry, October, January, April and July are our application acceptance periods.

Melissa Wissel:

OK well that's a wrap yeah we did it again 15 minutes out the door.

Jaime D. Perkins:

Thanks for having me again Melissa.

Melissa Wissel:

Lots of great stuff. If you missed part of this broadcast and want to go back and listen from the beginning or find us on any of your favorite podcasting apps look for that at CityStAugRadio.com. We want to keep you informed about what's happening in and around the city follow us on social you'll see us on Facebook, Instagram, and X at 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*.