

City of Melbourne, Florida
Agenda
Melbourne Downtown Redevelopment Advisory Committee

City Hall Council Chamber
900 E. Strawbridge Avenue
Melbourne, FL 32901

April 3, 2026 • 8:00 AM

1. A meeting of the Melbourne Downtown Redevelopment Committee was held in the Council Chamber at 900 East Strawbridge Avenue and was called to order at 8:00 a.m. by Chairman Lisa Herendeen.
2. All present said the Pledge of Allegiance.
3. The following members were:
 - Present: Lisa Herendeen, Chair
Bert Luer, Vice Chair
JoAnn Davis, Member
Gerry Smith, Member
Stefan Hartmann, Alternate Member
Brett Miller, Alternate Member
 - Absent: Marva Murray, Member (excused)
Chris Adams, Member (excused)
John Lucas, Member
 - Also Present: Cindy Dittmer, Community Development Director
Robert McKinzie, Economic Development Manager
Carmin Velasquez, Redevelopment Planner
City Council Member Marcus Smith
Mary Wolak, Recording Secretary
4. **Approval of Minutes – March 6, 2026**
Moved by Miller/Smith to approve the March 6, 2026 meeting minutes, as presented.
Motion carried unanimously.
5. **Melbourne Main Street Update**
Amil Cordova, Executive Director, Melbourne Main Street

This item was not heard and has been moved to the next meeting.
6. **CIP Projects Review and Discussion.**

Mr. McKinzie stated that staff would like to have a discussion with the Committee regarding the prioritization of the funded CIP projects. Mr. McKinzie clarified that these projects have funding and are currently not in the 5-year CIP schedule for request of additional funding. The funded projects are proposed by staff based on priority as follows:

1. Public Parking Garage Signage - \$60,000
2. Riverview Park Entrance and Signage - \$1,251,718.32
3. Welcome Signs at City Entrances - \$100,000 (\$50,000 CRA)
4. Downtown Gateway at US-192/Front Street- \$80,000
5. Municipal/Vernon Lighting Installation -\$69,430.37

Mr. McKinzie gave a brief description of each project.

Mr. Luer asked whether there are any charges for parking during special events.

Mr. McKinzie responded that once the current parking contract expires this summer, it will not be renewed, as the City has decided to not charge for parking in downtown for special events. He further clarified that the Public Parking Garage Signage project is to advertise open public parking within the garage and to be in place for when the City begins time limited parking enforcement.

Mr. Luer asked if Riverview Park will have any additional projects after the park entrance signage is installed. Mr. McKinzie stated that this is currently the only capital improvement project scheduled for the park through 2042 using CRA funding.

Mr. Hartmann commented that there is limited activity available at Riverview Park and suggested that the cost associated with the Riverview Park and Entrance signage project could be redirected to other improvements within the park. He commented that padel courts could be installed at Riverview Park and shared that it is a growing sport that would attract people to the park.

Ms. Davis and Ms. Dittmer discussed the Downtown Gateway at US-192/Front Street signage. Ms. Dittmer also noted that staff is looking for input into if these projects are still a priority for the committee, if not staff will go back to City Council to remove any projects.

Mr. McKinzie outlined the current 5-Year CIP Projects, which include:

1. Holmes Park Plaza Public Space – \$1,226,470.10 (estimated total cost of \$6M)
2. Downtown Core Streetscape – \$2,554,699.35 (estimated total cost of \$24.15M; to be funded through bonds and Water/Sewer Stormwater Funds in FY28/29)
3. Parking Management – \$107,300
4. Downtown South Expansion Sidewalk Survey – \$185,000
5. West Crane Creek Pedestrian Bridge – \$440,879.81 (funded through Transportation Impact Fees; estimated total cost of \$8M)

Mr. McKinzie stated that, based on staff's forecast, all CRA projects, with the exception of the West Crane Creek Pedestrian Bridge, can be completed by the 2042 sunset date. He noted that no new major capital projects can be initiated.

Ms. Dittmer added that staff has met with the City's Finance Director to review the current budget, operating costs, and the ability to issue bond debt. Based on the Finance Director's analysis of the CRA budget through 2042, with several assumptions related to current costs and growth, the CRA can bond the

Downtown Core Streetscape project, cover the debt service of the bond, and will still be able to complete current identified CIP projects aside from the West Crane Creek Pedestrian Bridge.

Mr. Miller asked if the Holmes Park Plaza project is being fully funded by the CRA. Ms. Dittmer clarified that the project is currently under design and there is a partial funding source through the City's Stormwater Utility Fund for the installation of a baffle box. She shared that these estimates are based on today's cost and the Streetscape project is about to go out for a Request for Qualifications (RFQ) for design which is estimated to be about \$2 million.

Concerns about the project were raised by several members. Ms. Herendeen shared her concerns regarding the West Crane Creek Pedestrian Bridge and that she does not want to lose the project. Mr. Hartmann suggested that closing roads could eliminate the need to widen sidewalks and reduce overall project costs.

Ms. Smith expressed concern that the Streetscape project could negatively impact downtown businesses due to construction-related closures and asked if the merchants are aware. Staff discussed the number of public workshops held in 2023 that had good participation from the merchants and property owners.

Mr. Luer stated that this project has been in the works for many years and is not something that hasn't been discussed before. He went on to say that the committee should not make vast changes to a project that has already been vetted by the community. Ms. Dittmer reminded the committee that the streetscape project was recently presented to City Council where they reconfirmed their commitment to the project and the funding approach.

Ms. Herendeen asked if these projects are in jeopardy of funding. Ms. Dittmer explained that they are not in jeopardy of funding but staff wanted to have a big picture discussion of the future of the CRA budget. She clarified that the West Crane Creek Bridge has always been held in year 5 of the CIP schedule and by moving forward with the streetscape project there would not be adequate funding for the bridge.

Chairwoman Herendeen opened the discussion to the public.

Mr. Herendeen, a member of the public, commented that the expansion area is the original downtown and that there is obviously blight in the area. He also commented on potentially losing the West Crane Creek Bridge project and his support for the signage project.

There was discussion among the committee around Phase 3 of the South U.S. 1 Streetscape project and more projects for Riverview Park.

Mr. Luer brought up as the Downtown Core Streetscape project progresses there may be opportunities for the committee to change the project and make decisions on what's needed for the project. There was a discussion about the Parks department making improvements to Riverview Park.

There was discussion around the CRA budget and the forecast that was done by the Finance Director estimating that these will be the final projects that the CRA can accomplish before the sunset date.

Mr. Luer made a motion to support the five funded projects as listed in order of priority. There was no second. Motion failed.

There was further discussion on the priority of projects and how they should be prioritized.

Ms. Herendeen stated that there should be more public input before moving forward with the RFQ for the streetscape project. Ms. Dittmer stated that City Council reaffirmed that they are wanting to move forward with the project, if the committee is concerned, the committee can nominate someone to speak at the next council meeting on behalf of this Committee.

Mr. Miller motioned to prioritize funded CIP projects as follows:

1. Public Parking Garage Signage
2. Municipal/Vernon Lighting Installation
3. Downtown Gateway at US-192/Front Street
4. Riverview Park Entrance and Signage
5. Welcome Signs at City Entrances

The motion was seconded by Mr. Luer. Motion passed 5-1.

Ms. Dittmer asked if the committee would still like to bring up their concerns of the streetscape project to City Council.

Moved by Herendeen/Hartmann to recommend the Streetscape Project go back to City Council with suggestions that before going out for RFQ the City should reach back out for additional public input and to include additional projects for Riverview Park and Phase 3 of the South Expansion Streetscape.

Mr. Luer asked what City Council determined at the March 10 meeting. Ms. Dittmer stated that they reaffirmed their support of the streetscape project and to move forward with the RFQ. She also reminded the committee that \$1 million of the current funding comes from a state appropriation for the design. Mr. Miller emphasized the importance of following through with the state's commitment to the project and that he does not support the motion made.

Moved by Herendeen, she called the vote.

A roll call vote was taken with the Committee members voting as follows:

Aye: Herendeen, Hartmann

Nay: Luer, Smith, Davis, Miller

Motion failed.

Moved by Davis/No Second to include Riverview Park and Phase III of the South Expansion Streetscape Project.

Motion failed.

Ms. Dittmer explained that there is only a finite amount of funds the CRA has and it would be financially unfeasible to include more projects. Ms. Dittmer stated that there is a 10-year project list that identifies all CRA projects that staff can bring for discussion at a future meeting. The committee gave consensus to have a future discussion around the 10-year project list.

7. Small Business Incentive Program

Mr. McKinzie presented the concept of a proposed Small Business Incentive Program following discussion at the March 24 City Council meeting. The program is intended to complement the existing façade improvement program by adding an interior building improvement component to support business retention and attract new businesses, while remaining compliant with statutory requirements. Staff also discussed the general lack of awareness among merchants regarding existing resources and the idea of hosting a small business workshop to connect downtown businesses with assistance agencies.

Mr. McKinzie stated that eligible improvements would be limited to permanent interior upgrades to ensure the investment remains with the property. He provided examples of eligible improvements, including ADA compliance upgrades, correction of building code deficiencies, plumbing and electrical work, and HVAC upgrades. He gave examples of a new business coming into the area and utilizing this grant as well as a current business already located downtown and how they could use the grant.

Mr. Hartmann stated that he supports the idea and that a program like this is much needed. His concern was as the value of the property increases how can the City control rent prices if landlords increase the rent. Ms. Dittmer responded that the City has no control over rent prices.

Mr. Luer asked if this program will be combined with the façade grant program. Ms. Dittmer replied that this program could be combined or it could also a stand-alone program.

Ms. Herendeen stated that this program was originally brought up by Councilman Smith to be a business grant and mentorship program but is now in the form of a building interior improvement program.

Ms. Dittmer stated that staff went this direction with the program as there are Florida Statute requirements on what CRA dollars can be used for. She stated that a business mentorship type of program would not meet the statutory requirement. She went on to say that feedback from the workshop, as well as conversations with business owners downtown, is that access to capital and a program like this would be very beneficial.

Chairwoman Herendeen opened the discussion for public comments.

Councilman Smith thanked staff for their work on this but stated that this program is not meeting the intent of the program he originally proposed. He shared information about the Upstart Cocoa Program. He stated he sees this program more for existing businesses and the Cocoa program is for new businesses that would help fill the vacancies. He stated he brought this to City Council and City Council directed him to work with the Advisory Committee on this and he will work with staff on bringing this back to the Committee.

Mr. Hartmann stated that he leases a historic building off Fifth Avenue and the trend is that he makes improvements to the property and then the landlord raises his rent.

Ms. Herendeen shared that she brought this point to council and that she has concerns with investing in properties that landlords do not upkeep. She stated she does not support the Interior Building Improvement Program and asked what statutory concerns staff has with the other programs.

Mr. McKinzie responded that a program similar to UpStart Cocoa could be done with the use of general fund dollars but the Florida Statutes requirements of CRA dollars can only be used to remove slum and blight conditions and the investment has to remain within the CRA district. He stated that CRA dollars could not be used for business operations or mentoring expenses as a business could close or move out of the area taking that investment with them.

Kathryn Rudloff stated that they are currently funded by CRA dollars through the City of Cocoa and that it can be done. She mentioned looking into the CRA charter and research other cities to see how they have done it. She then gave an overview of the Cocoa program and weVenture's role.

Ms. Herendeen asked if the issue is with the CRA Charter or with Florida Statute. Mr. McKinzie responded that it's not a charter issue but a Florida Statute issue.

There was discussion around CRA dollars being used for capital versus business operation expenses.

Ms. Herendeen recognized all involved who worked on bringing this together and then asked Councilman Smith if he has been involved in meeting with the City Attorney to discuss this. Councilman Smith said he has not but if the Advisory Committee sees value in this program, then staff can take a deeper dive to see if there is a way to make it work.

Ms. Velasquez stated that staff has been in communication with the City Attorney's Office regarding issues with the statutory requirements and proposed staff to bring this to the next meeting with further details.

The Committee gave consensus to have a further discussion at the next meeting.

8. Additional Business

Mr. McKinzie announced that the 2025 CRA Annual Report is now available on the City's website. He also noted that the Melbourne Main Street Stakeholder

Meeting will be held on April 23 in the Council Chamber, with both morning and evening sessions scheduled.

9. **General Public Comment**

Mr. Smith announced the upcoming Ekspo Balta event and distributed flyers to the Committee.

10. **Adjournment**

The meeting was adjourned by Chairman Herendeen at 10:19 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Mary Wolak

Mary Wolak, Recording Secretary