City of Melbourne, Florida
Agenda
Melbourne Downtown Redevelopment Advisory Committee

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

May 1, 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
John Lucas, Member
Marva Murray, Member
Chris Adams, Member
Brett Miller, Alternate Member

Absent: Stefan Hartmann, Alternate Member (excused)

Also Present: Cindy Dittmer, Community Development Director
Robert McKinzie, Economic Development Manager
Adam Conley, City Attorney
Carmin Velasquez, Redevelopment Planner
City Council Member Marcus Smith
Mary Wolak, Recording Secretary

4. **Approval of Minutes – April 3, 2026**

Moved by Adams/Smith to approve the April 3, 2026 meeting minutes, as presented.

Motion carried unanimously.

5. **Melbourne Main Street Update**
Amil Cordova, Executive Director, Melbourne Main Street

Mr. Cordova presented his second quarter report, focusing on the Melbourne Main Street (MMS) financial report. He noted that a Board retreat was held in January, during which members collaborated on a strategic plan. Committee Chairs were identified for each of the four committees, and he explained that committee meetings are held monthly.

Mr. Cordova stated he has heard concerns from business owners regarding the lack of foot traffic downtown. MMS has been working with business owners to identify what has been successful in attracting people downtown in the past and continues to explore effective ways to increase foot traffic. MMS has also met with the City Clerk's Office to better understand the event permitting process including required steps and associated fees.

Mr. Cordova reported that MMS and the City have been conducting quarterly walkthroughs downtown to help ensure the area remains efficient and effective. He noted that trees and landscaping have recently been replaced where needed.

The semi-annual Stakeholders Meeting was held on April 23, 2026, with the next meeting anticipated in September 2026. Mr. Cordova also discussed the BOOMS Tracker database, which helps MMS track business vacancies. In addition, MMS is utilizing a new Customer Relationship Management program to assist businesses with advertisements, social media links, and event promotion, noting that it has become an important communication tool.

Mr. Cordova highlighted several upcoming spring and summer events, including Botanical Fest, Putta Palooza, and the Sidewalk Sale. He stated that MMS staff is working on new upcoming events. He also discussed social media outreach, noting that Melbourne Downtown had approximately 18,500 followers as of February 2026. MMS also electronically distributes a monthly newsletter. Mr. Cordova emphasized that communication is one of his top priorities.

Mr. Cordova concluded his presentation by displaying the 2026 Melbourne Main Street Budget covering October 2025 through September 2026.

Ms. Herendeen commented that this report was important, and it appeared to show MMS up approximately $70,000 from events.

Mr. Cordova clarified that the report does not compare prior years and instead reflects the projections for the current fiscal year.

Mr. Luer noted that MMS appears to be on target and the expenses are slightly lower.

Ms. Herendeen stated that the Botanical Fest was successful and asked whether it generated a substantial profit. Mr. Cordova explained the sponsors played a key role in offsetting expenses, along with volunteer support including City staff. He noted that the event did generate a profit for MMS, although final numbers were not available yet.

Ms. Herendeen expressed hope that MMS engagement would continue to increase. Mr. Cordova agreed and stated that MMS is making additional efforts to promote events on Thursday in hopes of encouraging more weekend visits downtown.

6. CIP Projects Review and Discussion.

Mr. McKinzie spoke about First Amendment to the Master Redevelopment Agreement. He stated the amendments include the following:

- The "Commencement Date" shall be no later than January 1, 2029.

• The “Completion Date” means the date when construction of the Project is completed as provided herein, but in no event later than December 31, 2030, unless otherwise extend as provided herein.

• The “Construction Period” means the period of time beginning on the Commencement Date and ending upon the sooner to occur of the following:
(i) December 31, 2030, or (ii) the Completion Date.

• Subject to the terms and conditions set forth herein, the Developer will convey the Land Donation Parcel to the City no later than June 1, 2026.

Moved by Adams/Luer to approve the First Amendment to the Master Redevelopment Agreement for 2100 Melbourne Court.

Motion carried unanimously.

7. CRA Capital Projects & Programs

Mr. McKinzie presented the list of programs and projects that are currently identified within the Redevelopment Plan which was amended in 2025. He stated that statutorily anything that receives funding through the CRA must be identified within the redevelopment plan.

Mr. Luer requested clarification on the two lists presented. Mr. McKinzie explained that one includes structured programs such as the Façade Improvement Program, Parking Management, and Community Policing, among others. He noted the other list contains capital projects.

8. Small Business Incentive Program

Mr. McKinzie stated that Staff is working on a Building Improvement Program, which would serve as an expansion of the Façade Improvement Grant Program. He explained the purpose of the program is to attract and support new and existing businesses by offsetting the cost of interior improvements required to occupy vacant or underutilized spaces, as well as to enhance the functionality of existing spaces. The goals of the program would include:

- Activating vacant storefronts and office spaces
- Encouraging new businesses and job creation
- Supporting business retention and expansion
- Improving the quality and functionality of commercial interiors
- Increasing economic activity and reducing slum and blight

At the direction of City Council, Staff is developing the program and will present more formal guidelines back to the board for their review. Staff requested feedback from the board at this time.

Ms. Herendeen stated that she does not support the use of grant funds for interior improvements.

Ms. Dittmer provided examples of potential eligible improvements, noting that they would be permanent interior improvements to ensure the investment remains with the property. Examples included:

- ADA compliance upgrades

- Building code deficiency corrections
- Plumbing and electric work
- HVAC upgrades
- Restroom construction or upgrades
- Interior framing and drywall
- Fire suppression upgrades
- Kitchen build-outs for restaurant use

Ms. Dittmer explained that staff is pursuing this approach to help new and existing business owners overcome common barriers they may face. The goal is to attract new businesses and encourage business retention downtown.

Ms. Herendeen asked if there was a way to determine which downtown buildings are up to Code. Ms. Dittmer explained that Florida Building Code Requirements are continuously updated and changed, and the city does not maintain a list of buildings in compliance with code updates.

Ms. Dittmer further explained the process for the Façade Improvement Program when an application is received. Staff noted that the proposed Building improvement Program would follow a similar process, although it may omit some of the initial steps. City Council approval and a formal agreement would still be required.

Ms. Davis stated that the new Building Improvement Program should be structured as a matching grant.

The Board expressed a general preference for encouraging more retail uses downtown, rather than additional bars and restaurants. The committee also discussed having discretion over which applications are approved and advanced through the program.

Ms. Dittmer noted that there are many instances where businesses are required to meet building code requirements to make updates, additions, or modifications. In some cases, tenants lack the funding to complete the work, while property owners are unwilling to invest. She explained that this program is intended to help bridge that gap.

Mr. Miller suggested that some level of lease commitment or term requirement should be included between property owners and tenants.

Ms. Dittmer stated that Staff is proposing to use the same structure as the Façade Improvement Grant Program, which operates as a matching grant, or potentially a different funding ratio, which has not yet been determined. She noted that grant funds are not disbursed until the work is completed.

Mr. Lucas raised the concept of a public-private program model. Ms. Dittmer explained that such a model typically involves an outside entity reviewing a developer's qualifications, which can be costly. Mr. McKinzie acknowledged these concerns and stated that the goal is to keep the program accessible and easy to navigate. Staff noted that this concept is worth further consideration, including the possibility of a third-party review such as MMS.

Ms. Davis asked about the ability to use WeVenture's mentorship program as a requirement and if the CRA could pay half of the tuition cost.

Ms. Dittmer stated that Staff's perspective is that a business coaching/mentorship type of program would not meet the statutory requirement as an eligible use of CRA dollars.

Mr. Cordova stated that the program could help increase property values and emphasized the importance of involving property owners to help maintain stable rent levels for tenants. He noted the opportunity could create a better tenant mix and requested that MMS be included in future discussions with the CRA Committee and city staff.

There was discussion regarding whether the property owner should be the primary applicant for the Façade Improvement Program Grant and or the proposed Building Improvement Program, since they will benefit from the improvements. It was noted that this approach could help address ongoing vacancies downtown. Staff indicated they will evaluate this issue further.

Council Member Smith emphasized that the focus should be on attracting new businesses and supporting business startup and growth. He expressed support for involving WeVenture and referenced the Cocoa program as an example.

Mr. McKinzie stated that CRA funds must be used in compliance with statutory requirements and that expenditures are strictly regulated under allowable CRA uses.

City Attorney Adam Conley introduced himself to the Committee and provided clarification on legal considerations. He explained that the CRA Act outlines both explicitly allowed expenditures and areas that require careful interpretation. He noted that aligning the proposed Building Improvement Program with the existing Façade Improvement Program would provide clearer justification and stronger defensibility as eligible CRA expenditures.

Ms. Herendeen stated that the priority should be making it easier for businesses to open and operate downtown.

Ms. Herendeen suggested that staff take the Committee's feedback back for further discussion and communicate to Council the direction the Committee would like to see. Ms. Dittmer noted that Council has already provided direction to move forward. She stated that staff will return with a more detailed discussion outlining the program guidelines.

8. **<u>Additional Business</u>**

The July 3, 2026 meeting will be rescheduled due to the holiday. Once a new meeting date in July is determined, the Committee will be notified.

Mr. McKinzie asked the Committee if staff could begin distributing meeting agenda packets electronically only. The committee agreed to electronic distribution

Ms. Davis requested that the meeting presentations be emailed to the Committee after the meeting takes place.

9. General Public Comment

Crystal Plain, owner of 3rd Star Resource & Consulting Group LLC and Black Brilliance on the Rooftop introduced herself to the Board. She explained that 3rd Star is a veteran and minority-owned small business that provides services to commercial, private, and government entities. The business operates on Babcock Street and Avenue B and works with a variety of businesses in Melbourne.

Ms. Plain announced an upcoming cultural event to be held at the Hotel Melby rooftop on July 1. She encouraged attendees to help spread the word and noted that they are currently seeking sponsors and vendors interested in partaking.

10. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned by Chairman Herendeen at 9:38 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Mary Wolak

Mary Wolak, Recording Secretary