



**The City of**

**DEFUNIAK**

**SPRINGS**

**FLORIDA**

**CRA**

**COMMUNITY  
REDEVELOPMENT  
AUTHORITY**

CITY OF DEFUNIAK SPRINGS, FLORIDA

COMMUNITY REDEVELOPMENT

STRATEGIC PLAN

2019

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## LETTER TO THE COMMUNITY

To the community of DeFuniak Springs:

The DeFuniak Springs Community Redevelopment Plan found in the pages of this document is designed to give guidance to community leadership based on citizen input for the future of DeFuniak Springs. The plan reflects the values, concerns, and hopes of DeFuniak Springs residents, as well as those of our elected officials and city staff. The City of DeFuniak Springs operates under the obligations, constraints, and aspirations common to many counties across the Panhandle of Florida. The city is responsible for the delivery of core services that are mandated by state or federal law. Additionally, the city government aspires to provide additional services that, while they are discretionary, significantly benefit our residents, business owners, and visitors. In the delivery of both mandatory and discretionary services, DeFuniak Springs might be a direct service provider or enter a partnership with Walton County or another public service provider supporting city-provided services.

The City of DeFuniak Springs continuously strives to provide residents with quality services and steer towards a shared vision of a vibrant community ensuring the health, safety, and wellbeing of generations to live, work, and play. It is this desire that led the city council of DeFuniak Springs to establish the Community Redevelopment Agency for the city of DeFuniak Springs. By using a measured and deliberate approach to redevelopment, the new CRA will act as the implementation tool for the city as we strive for our desired future.

This strategic plan is designed to advance this vision by establishing a shared understanding of our desired future, the fulfillment of short-term community priorities based on input from community members and stakeholders, strategies that maximize the impact of the CRA's constrained existing resources, and longer-term strategies that move us closer to our desired future by leveraging existing and potentially new resources.

The following document identifies six principal community strategic goals and six community project goals to focus the City of DeFuniak Springs Community Redevelopment Agency (CRA) through the year 2030. The goals are put forth after extensive research, community surveys, and consultation with experts in the fields of community development, urban planning and future growth. The goals are forged from your suggestions through community visioning opportunities, online surveys and informal interviews. Though this plan is built on a ten-year horizon, it is the expectation of all involved that the Community Redevelopment Agency will review all action plans monthly and quarterly and hold a yearly full-day planning session to make any and all adjustments needed to complete all tasks on or before their preset completion dates. What follows is an attempt to represent all community members through unique and lasting projects for DeFuniak Springs.

The six principal community strategic goals are:

1. Economic Development
2. Public Spaces, Streetscapes and Gateways
3. Increase Housing Opportunities
4. Community Development
5. Transportation
6. Economic Viability

The six community project goals are:

1. An Incentive Plan for More Diverse Housing Options
2. Completion of Renovations to the Hall of Brotherhood
3. A Comprehensive Infrastructure, Streetscape and Gateway Plan
4. A Master Plan for Economic Development
5. A New or Renovated Municipal Complex
6. A New or Renovated Amphitheater

The process to build this long-range plan has shown the resiliency and fortitude of the citizens of DeFuniak Springs and the willingness of our community to look at new ideas for solving persistent problems. Because of the participation of the community throughout this process, we have a clear vision of the issues lying before us and a strong sense of direction as we begin this process.

The success of the plan set before you today will improve the quality of life for all community members for generations to come. The fellowship and spirit of partnership shown during the planning process was overwhelming. This same spirit will be needed throughout the development of each goal to ensure a successful completion.

Together, we will emerge from this process a more cohesive, vibrant city than ever before.

## INTRODUCTION

The DeFuniak Springs Community Redevelopment Agency (CRA) is a public entity created by the City Council of the City of DeFuniak Springs (the Council). On February 26th, 2018, Resolution 2018-07 passed by the Council made the determination that there was a need to initiate revitalization of blighted areas inside the city limits of DeFuniak Springs, FL. On August 13, 2018, Resolution 2018-18 of the City Council for DeFuniak Springs officially formed the DeFuniak Springs Community Redevelopment Agency (CRA), placing the City Council members as the CRA board of directors in accordance with Florida Statutes Chapter 163, Part III. The passing of Resolution 2018-18 outlined the rights, powers, duties, privileges and immunities given to the City Council acting as the CRA board of directors. The DeFuniak Springs CRA is a public agency adhering to all standards, scrutiny and accountability belying all public agencies in the city of DeFuniak Springs, county of Walton, and state of Florida. The CRA is set as a unit of the city government of DeFuniak Springs and operates to direct areas of redevelopment inside the Community Redevelopment Area of DeFuniak Springs. DeFuniak Springs redevelopment actions are guided by the CRA board, the CRA administration and the community focused on revitalizing the city of DeFuniak Springs.

The CRA is subsidized through a tax incremental financing fund (TIFF). At inception, a base value was established of the CRA area's taxable property value. Each year, as the taxable value increases due to capital improvements and redevelopment efforts, the difference, or increment, in the base year and the current year is deposited into the CRA Fund. The CRA fund is used to implement the goals of the CRA Plan set forth by and for the community of DeFuniak Springs, FL.

The DeFuniak Springs Community Redevelopment Plan housed inside this document is intended to serve as an outline or framework for guiding capital investment, economic development/redevelopment and community investment inside the DeFuniak Springs Redevelopment District outlined in the DeFuniak Springs CRS Map. The Plan categorizes redevelopment objectives, initiatives, and capital projects that may be undertaken to reverse blighted conditions within the Redevelopment District. The Plan addresses visioning as well as strategies for financing, implementation, management, administration, and sustainability. We will continue to refine and update all strategies as we implement and progress through the Plan. We have based the strategies and costs identified in the Plan on the most current data available but recognize that will require additional study before specific action is taken by the DeFuniak Springs CRA to initiate, refine or implement a given project.

## Purpose

Throughout the history of DeFuniak Springs, the area designated as the business district inside the CRA district has served as the core for business activity and community gatherings. As with most small communities, DeFuniak Springs business district has struggled through the recent past to compete in an increasingly global economy. Industrial, retail and professional services have left the city core for perceived better spaces. A large income disparity gap, over dependence on tourism and lack of infrastructure have aided in the lagging economy of DeFuniak Springs, but in our

recent past, DeFuniak Springs has seen many positive changes and improvements in the advancement of new business recruitment. The CRA district will strive to be a hub for a mixed-use, pedestrian friendly area offering a balance of hometown feel, world-class attractions, amazing dining and retail, exciting entertainment opportunities and beautiful professional offices.

The purpose of the CRA Strategic Plan is to give guidance to the board of directors throughout the redevelopment process of DeFuniak Springs by identifying community priorities, strategic opportunities and economic partners to best execute the CRA goals. The CRA Strategic Plan is to be a guiding document, used during all aspects of planning, zoning, mapping and construction to ensure a consistent and cohesive layout, look and feel for the city of DeFuniak Springs. The DeFuniak Springs Community Redevelopment Agency will build heightened commercial activity and interest to grow existing businesses and attract future investment opportunities, increase median salary scores, grow the tax base, and improve the overall quality of life for residents of DeFuniak Springs. The CRA will encourage the development of intellectual and human capital through workforce training programs, educational programs and cooperative business programs. Activities of the CRA will focus on both traditional economic development and newly developing industries and technology. The ultimate accomplishments of this plan are not in the words written, but in the results derived from the actions produced in accordance to the plan. The goal of all work done by the CRA is to build a flourishing commercial and residential district by stimulating private investment in real estate, start-up businesses, industry diversification and by helping eliminate barriers, both public and private, to these positive investment in DeFuniak Springs.

## Vision

The Community Redevelopment Agency of the City of DeFuniak Springs vision is to improve the quality of life for all residents of DeFuniak Springs by building a community where all members have ample opportunities for quality employment, housing, services and a balanced cultural experience. Through a balance, innovative persistent approach, the CRA will build a center for commerce, civic activities and entertainment and represent the local identity of DeFuniak Springs and Walton County Florida.

## Mission

The mission of the Community Redevelopment Agency of the City of DeFuniak Springs is to protect and improve the commercial areas of DeFuniak Springs through thoughtful, controlled economic growth and build upon and preserve the residential neighborhoods through activities building higher quality of life for all. The CRA economic revitalization process will forge an environment that attracts investors, encourages improvements in building structure and aesthetics and attracts new construction and business. The CRA will focus on obtaining necessary funding for public infrastructure improvements, streetscape build-out and marketing of the commercial district to attract new businesses to the district.

## Action Plan

The Community Redevelopment Agency holds in high regard the work being done to expand commercial activity and economic development throughout Walton County, FL, especially in the DeFuniak Springs Area. The CRA will support the DeFuniak Springs business community by improving the look and substance of our City. The CRA will facilitate the acquisition of property, when feasible, engage in real estate development, and promote redevelopment across the City. The CRA will examine every opportunity to assist development of infill sites with new construction options and advise on better usage of existing buildings, structures and homesites, especially in the downtown district. The CRA will identify abandoned, vacant or otherwise underutilized properties inside the CRA district, including the Opportunity Zone of Walton County, categorizing them by greatest potential, and incentivize investors to bring these properties back to active status. Programs that broaden investment access, reduce or delay impact fees and/or resolve adverse conditions impacting commercial and mixed-use viability inside the CRA District will be closely examined and, if deemed correct and viable, implemented for use. The CRA recognizes the natural beauty of DeFuniak Springs and will strive to encourage green building practices in all commercial projects.

The CRA will begin by examining and evaluating the current Land Development Code in coordination with the City Planning Department and City Manager's Office along with other pertinent regulatory documents to determine what, if any, changes need to be made to best advance the goals of commercial and mixed-use recruitment. All city owned property will be evaluated to determine their value, land designation and best future use for the city or commercial/mixed-use growth. The CRA, in conjunction with pertinent city departments will examine the current City Comprehensive Plan and land development review process to identify any inconsistencies in policies and procedures to mitigate and obstructions to the goals set forth by the City Council of DeFuniak Springs in their role as the CRA Board of Directors.

The CRA understands and recognizes that a strong residential base is very important to the long-term viability and vitality of any city. Diverse housing draws in a diverse population, ultimately giving broader support to both the business community and the overall character of the city of DeFuniak Springs. The DeFuniak Springs Community Redevelopment Agency will strive to support high-quality, well-designed, multifaceted and, most importantly, safe housing options throughout the CRA district. These options should deliver functional, diverse opportunities for renters and homeowners at all price points. The CRA will promote a gamut of housing options, including but not limited to, single-family, multi-family, mixed-use, infill, and senior/assisted development. This should ensure reinvestment into our existing neighborhoods and broaden housing options throughout the CRA district.

## STRATEGIC GOALS

### Overview

All successful corporations, whether they are public or private, begins with a comprehensive strategic plan for all business functions. The Florida League of Cities (FLC), a not-for-profit organization focused on supporting local government bodies, defines Strategic planning as ***the process by which leaders of an organization, such as a local government, determine what it intends to be in the future and how it will get there.*** This process involves high levels of coordination throughout the municipality to develop the correct vision for a city's future and to administer the appropriate goals, priorities, and action strategies to achieve that vision. A well devised strategic plan will act as the directional document to prioritize, implement and accomplish the goals set forth by the community; ultimately delivering a physical manifestation of the community design concepts agreed upon.

### Economic Development

The City of DeFuniak Springs is the governmental seat for Walton County, Florida and the birthplace of the Florida Chautauqua Assembly. By most measures, DeFuniak Springs has an eclectic economy, including state and local government, national and international trade, agriculture and farming, tourism, and natural resource development. Our desired future economy will offer more equitable access to opportunities for employment and alleviate poverty, with more residents able to find living wage jobs without driving outside the city to reach their place of employment. The city's long-term planning, infrastructure investments, and direct services should support economic development indirectly by serving businesses as well as residents. The future desire of the CRA and city of DeFuniak Springs is to take a more hands-on and proactive role in shaping the region's economy by investing in the development, attraction and support of businesses inside the city, county and region. To accomplish this strategic goal, the CRA must move into a leadership role in regional economic development, emphasizing the creation of equitable economic opportunities and the alleviation of poverty, strengthen the role of DeFuniak Springs in the landscape of tourism throughout Walton County and the Panhandle of Florida, and create messaging so people and businesses think of DeFuniak Springs first when make business, leisure and travel decisions.

### Public Spaces, Streetscapes and Gateways

The City of DeFuniak Springs is highlighted with beautiful natural attractions including but not limited to our historic Chipley Park, our numerous natural and man-made lakes, public recreation areas and green spaces. These areas offer sufficient recreation and relaxation opportunities to support the health and welfare of the children and other residents of the area. The CRA will work to enhance opportunities within the city to enhance the lifestyle of residents through beautification projects, providing higher levels of accessibility to resources and inviting public spaces for community gatherings and social events. A plan for improving the aesthetic conditions of the streets and public rights-of-way

throughout DeFuniak Springs should include decorative street lighting, gateway signage, landscaping, and other improvements based on public input and professional advisement.

### Increase Housing Opportunities

The City of DeFuniak Springs and all of Walton County, Florida is experiencing a population growth with the potential to double or triple in size over the next ten years. As the CRA and city look at current conditions and plan for our future, we must take into account this growth as we plan our housing needs for the next generation. Many times, a housing study looks to the past for historical data to foreshadow upcoming needs of the community, but in the case of Walton County and DeFuniak Springs, this will not be an adequate or acceptable solution for building a diverse housing plan for DeFuniak Springs. Extensive research and planning must be done to gather all data from public and private sources to truly understand the horizon of need to come. Attention must be paid to the needs of our growing service area and the housing options they will desire. Teachers, public safety officers, college and graduate students, construction workers, IT employees and others will be attracted to the area to fill service needs of our growing population. This is a segment DeFuniak Springs must plan for and work to attract. Additionally, as formal active retirement communities begin to develop in the region, the needs of their residents must be met by local residents. These residents need proper housing solutions and community amenities built with their family needs in mind.

### Community Development

Community Development encompasses all facets of the strategic goals set forth in this plan. Community development is and should be the overriding theme for all actions taken by the city and CRA. The need for development and redevelopment of DeFuniak Springs is driven by the opportunity to replace a combination of deteriorated structures, vacant land and obsolete structures and street patterns with better options; create a positive economic benefit for the community. With a prime location along the Interstate 10, commercial railroad access, a municipal airport and underdeveloped transportation links, community development of DeFuniak Springs will provide jobs for area residents, an increase in the community's tax base, and an attractive visual feature as the municipal seat for Walton County, Florida.

### Transportation

The City of DeFuniak Springs CRA will focus transportation efforts under the direction of the Complete Streets theory of development. As defined by the United States Department of Transportation, a Complete Street is ***a street designed and operated to enable safe use and support mobility for all users. Those include people of all ages and abilities, regardless of whether they are travelling as drivers, pedestrians, bicyclists, or public transportation riders.*** The concept of Complete Streets encompasses many approaches to planning, designing, and operating roadways and rights of way with all users in mind to make the transportation network safer and more efficient. The Florida Department of Transportation 2018 Design Manual for Street Design was named one of the ***Best Complete Street Initiatives of 2017.*** The DeFuniak Springs CRA will work closely with FDOT to produce transportation and mobility plans focused on the entire community.

## **Economic Viability**

The DeFuniak Springs Community Redevelopment Agency is given the task of transforming the city of DeFuniak Springs into the vision set forth by the citizens, elected officials and staff of the city. To accomplish this goal, the CRA must maintain an economic viability outside the general operational budget of the city of DeFuniak Springs. Every effort will be taken to ensure the resiliency of the agency both short and long-term.

## COMMUNITY PROJECT GOALS

### GOAL 1

#### AN INCENTIVE PLAN FOR MORE DIVERSE HOUSING OPTIONS

##### OVERVIEW

A diverse, sound residential base is important to the vitality of DeFuniak Springs; it is the key support for both the business community and the character of our city center. The Community Redevelopment Agency will work to continuously support a well-designed, safe, quality housing system throughout the CRA district. The CRA will encourage diverse housing options to deliver renters and homeowners quality options at all price points. A diverse market encompasses senior housing, multi-family developments, infill housing, single-family homes and mixed-use options and encourages reinvestment in blighted areas of the community and supports residential options close to the city center.

For DeFuniak Springs and its residents, a balanced housing mix consisting of a variety of home types and prices is important because it impacts the stability of neighborhoods, ability of residents to access a variety of housing choices as they age, the stability of property tax base, the ability to expand the city's job base, and the ability to attract new retailers and employers to the city.

To help achieve goal 1, this plan should incorporate incentives for more diverse housing options by including plans to acquire property, engage in real estate developments, and assist in residential site redevelopment. This will help strengthen and preserve single-family neighborhoods and begin establishing new multi-use facilities and multi-family developments. The CRA will work closely with the DeFuniak Springs Code Enforcement Department to prevent substandard construction and housing build-out by creating, refining, and enforcing high building standards. The CRA will offer design and any other assistance deemed necessary for new residential development and encourage green building practices to maximize sustainability.

The CRA incentive plan for diverse housing in DeFuniak Springs will include tools and programs including but not limited to, façade grants, infrastructure study costs, land assembly and other means to encourage reinvestment. These tools should be used to convert unused or under used residential areas to infill housing, reconstruct or renovate the exterior of buildings for mixed-use, and design aesthetically pleasing multi-family developments; both rentals and homeownerships.

The key steps to building an incentive plan for diverse housing inside DeFuniak Springs are establishing a visual master plan for the area, building and enforcing design and building standards for all residential solutions, establishing and funding diverse programs to support public/private partnerships and reducing the barriers currently in place to new and redevelopment projects.

## Performance Criteria

1. The plan must first examine the history of housing in DeFuniak Springs. Beginning in the 1880's, housing in DeFuniak Springs began with two options; single-family homes and boarding houses. This section should examine the shift in need for housing throughout time to better understand historic trends while looking at recent population growth and shifts to anticipate new trends emerging in the near future.
2. The plan must examine the population growth in relation to the housing stock growth over the same time frame. By doing so, a clear picture of historic housing needs can be determined. By using geospatial analysis of the housing market, we can determine growth patterns, population migration inside the city and surrounding areas, and areas of highest concentration for all segments of the population.
3. The plan should subdivide the city into sections for analysis of housing type by quarterly Certificates of Occupancy. This will help understand housing type trends by location and address concerns as new development explores build out options.
4. The plan should calculate the total number of housing units, segment all units out by type of housing and map out building trends to identify growing market needs. This will identify needs in single-family housing verses multifamily housing and further segment the need based on square footage, number of bedrooms and other amenities and cost to purchase or lease.
5. The study must identify the true Income-Level Housing Diversity trends for DeFuniak Springs. A balanced distribution of housing by type and by price is paramount to neighborhood stability and longevity. Factors other than US censes markers must be taken into account to understand the true housing marketplace for DeFuniak Springs.
6. The plan must address the life-cycle of housing needs in the city. Housing needs are not static. Needs change over time as people move through different stages of their lives. The availability of life-cycle housing sustains the community by preventing polarization of residents in one age or income group. As one generation of residents moves through its life-cycle, it can move into the housing provided by the previous generation, just as the next generation will move into the housing being vacated. This evolution is facilitated by the provision of diverse housing by type, value, and stage of life-cycle including affordable rental units for young people just beginning to enter the workforce, affordable single-family units for first-time home buyers and young families, move-up housing for people with growing families and incomes, empty-nester housing characterized by small size but high-quality and lower-maintenance, housing for seniors and the disabled that accommodates physical limitations, and assisted living environments to provide health and medical care to the elderly.
7. The plan must consider employment opportunities in the area as jobs determine the type of housing that residents can afford. Conversely, the housing types available in the area also affect the type of businesses and employment opportunities the city will attract. When deciding whether to locate in a particular city, retail businesses examine the demographics, including home sales prices, of that area. As DeFuniak Springs attempts to attract more businesses, its housing stock will become either a strength or a weakness in its recruitment of new firms.

## Desired Results

The plan should provide a range of housing options suitable for all stages and phases of the life cycle, while working towards a more even distribution of housing types throughout DeFuniak Springs. The plan should provide a map of existing housing gaps through a comprehensive Housing Needs Assessment and actively recruit developers to fill these gaps through new and redevelopment projects throughout the city.

## GOAL 2

### COMPLETION OF RENOVATIONS TO THE HALL OF BROTHERHOOD

#### OVERVIEW

The Hall of Brotherhood is the quintessential symbol of the DeFuniak Springs community and is seen as an integral component of our community life and history. During the Florida Chautauqua Assemblies, notable Americans like Vice President Thomas Marshall, American Red Cross Founder Clara Barton, and American Orator William Jennings Bryan have addressed packed audiences at this location. In 1934, the board of directors of the Florida Chautauqua Association who orchestrated the assemblies and who owned the campus, deeded the Chautauqua Hall of Brotherhood to the City of DeFuniak Springs. In 1972, the Chautauqua Hall of Brotherhood was added to the National Register of Historic Places. Today, the City of Defuniak Springs has undertaken a full restoration of the Hall of Brotherhood to restore it to the original glory it once held.

A completely renovated and operational Hall of Brotherhood will give residents and visitors alike a central location to begin the walk into our shared past, help understand present day DeFuniak Springs and launch community conversations about our shared future. The Hall of Brotherhood is very important to the residents of DeFuniak Springs throughout the year as a central focus for our Chautauqua Assembly, Lakefest, Halloween Nights, Christmas Reflections and many other events.

The key steps to this project are finalizing a master plan, solidifying funding for construction, and continuing renovation on the structure.

## GOAL 3

### A COMPREHENSIVE INFRASTRUCTURE STREETScape AND GATEWAY PLAN

#### OVERVIEW

The Comprehensive Infrastructure, Streetscape and Gateway plan (CISG) will generate new economic development in the city of DeFuniak Springs for both residential and commercial opportunity. The gateways into and exiting DeFuniak Springs are well defined and crucial for our shared economic success, and the walkability of our community is equally important to connect residents and visitors to our city. Formulation and execution of a comprehensive infrastructure, streetscape and gateway plan will connect the diverse geographic parts of our community and help solidify the shared vision of the City of DeFuniak Springs and the CRA; a vision to improve the quality of life for all residents of DeFuniak Springs by building a community where all members have ample opportunities for quality employment, housing, services and a balanced cultural experience.

The CISG should identify and encourage district improvements to infrastructure, internet access, utilities, landscaping, and streetscapes. All projects should be coordinated with both the public and private sectors involved at every level. Projects and initiatives should include but are not limited to – water/wastewater, curbs, gutters and drainage, sidewalks and roadways, gas and electricity, lighting and safety, and high-speed communications. This can be achieved by building strong relationships with existing and possible future utility providers inside and outside the region and driving an atmosphere of coordination and cooperation in building and implementing a comprehensive plan.

The key steps to this project are identifying known and unknown deficiencies throughout the district, coordinating with all public and private agencies to best address each issue, support co-locating of public facilities whenever possible, increase multi-modal mobility throughout the district, and coordinate with local forestry agencies for comprehensive landscaping designs.

#### Performance Criteria

1. Broadband internet access for the city of DeFuniak Springs is vital to move the community closer to the future we all desire. A high-speed internet connection is paramount to breaking down communication barriers related to distance and time, and allowing rural businesses to expand the target audience far beyond that of their geographic base. Availability of high-speed internet enables several benefits from both an economic and social perspective, and ultimately aids in the development of a whole economy and city, county and region.
2. A core schematic streetscape plan for each district is key to capturing each district's rich history and potential for growth.
3. Each district must be provided a streetscape development summary to guide decisions at every level of buildout to guide public and private projects.

4. A comprehensive lighting plan and diagram must be formulated to give safety and security to community members while not being overly obtrusive to the natural beauty of the city.
5. A public parking and transportation circulation plan must be formulated in conjunction with all other parts of the streetscape design work to insure properly designed complete streets move all pedestrians, bikers and motorist to their destination safely.
6. This section must identify the varied districts inside the city of DeFuniak Springs, make recommendations for each district and build a plan for implementation of all recommendations

### Desired Results

This section, when accomplished, should provide exceptional connection of the community to both the virtual and real world, establish safe and convenient multimodal networks of transportation throughout DeFuniak Springs, and bring safety, beauty, comfort and accessibility to the community on a much higher level.

## GOAL 4

### A MASTER PLAN FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

#### OVERVIEW

The Master Plan for Economic Development will address the key issues of workforce development, job creation, and promotion of tourism to the city of DeFuniak Springs, Florida. The plan builds strategies to enhance and protect the sustainability and resiliency of DeFuniak Springs' economy and works to diversify the city's economic base. It will help build and sustain capacity to adapt to short and long-term changes to economic drivers, both natural and man-made.

Today, more than one-half of the 2,363 employed residents of DeFuniak Springs work in an industry directly or indirectly tied to tourism inside Walton County, Florida. The tourism industry reported a \$4.4 billion economic impact to the area in 2017; \$2.98 billion of that coming directly from 4.01 million tourists. This helped create nearly 22,000 jobs with a combined income of \$630 million. That is an average of \$28,636.36 per job, well below the Florida United Way ALICE reported cost of living for a family of four in Walton County of \$49,524. Over 61% of the households in the DeFuniak Springs generate less than \$50,000 per year. The DeFuniak Springs median income is \$29,988.00, nearly \$20,000 less than Walton County and the State of Florida's median income of \$46,910 and \$48,900. Nearly one-in-four DeFuniak Springs residents is living in poverty, with the highest demographic being young girls age 6 to 11 followed by females 18 to 24.

This plan will coordinate efforts with all public, private and non-profit entities to build the roadmap for economic development in the city of DeFuniak Springs, Florida. The result is a comprehensive plan focused on all aspects of workforce development, community infrastructure and resiliency, and industry diversification. The plan will give clear guidance on industry recruitment, workforce housing locations, industry site locations and prep work for sites, infill projects to support new business and infrastructure needs and funding to support all projects for implementation.

## Performance Criteria

1. The plan must provide a multi-faceted vision for the area's economic and business development future as well as specific actions to ensure success. The plan must incorporate up-to-date economic development best practices. It must be realistic and implementable. It should identify key issues and provide specific recommendations on appropriate metrics that demonstrate economic development success. The DeFuniak Springs City Council, DeFuniak Springs Community Redevelopment Agency, DeFuniak Springs Economic Development Committee, business community and general population must embrace the strategy as visionary and actionable. Economic development partners and constituencies will be included in plan development meetings and discussions. The plan will be presented for approval to the DeFuniak Springs City Council and DeFuniak Springs Community Redevelopment Agency.
2. The city's economic measures must be compared to similar Florida and regional localities including unemployment and poverty rates, industry mixes, population growth, wages, building permits and more. Though DeFuniak Springs is a unique community, this data will offer a baseline comparison to get a better sense of how the city measures with to similar localities. The data should be tracked over time and compared with peer communities.
3. A comparison of budgets, staffing levels, capabilities and functional areas of DeFuniak Springs to like communities must also be included with recommendations for City adjustments to its program and budget.
4. The plan must carefully consider and incorporate goals of other governmental documents such as the DeFuniak Springs Comprehensive Plan.
5. The plan must be responsive to the priorities of DeFuniak Springs economic development partners and have buy-in from the community at large. The proposal must address how the proposer intends to include DeFuniak Springs economic development partners and community members in the preparation of the plan and how they intend to vet the prepared plan. The plan must be broadly discussed in a cross section of the community.
6. The plan must be organizationally comprehensive. The proposal must address how each of the functional areas within economic development, city government, and the broader community will be included in preparing and executing the plan. The proposal must identify goals and milestones to track implementation of the plan's recommendations and address how these goals and milestones will be collected and reported. Existing or readily available data (i.e., new business licenses issued, business-related taxes collected, employment levels, etcetera) should be utilized in the goals and milestones reporting.
7. The draft updated Economic Development Master Plan will be scheduled for presentation to the DeFuniak Springs City Council no more than six months after start of the project. As an element of the plan, the contracted agency will be required to present the revised document to the Community Redevelopment Agency, Economic Development Committee and the City Council. Once finalized and approved, The City Council will adopt the plan for action. The

Master Plan for Economic Development will be an implementing document of the City's Comprehensive Plan and Community Redevelopment Agency.

### Desired Results

The Master Plan for Economic Development is aimed at building a comprehensive plan focused on all aspects of workforce development, community infrastructure and resiliency, and industry diversification. The plan will give clear guidance on industry recruitment, workforce housing locations, industry site locations and prep work for sites, infill projects to support new business and infrastructure needs and funding to support all projects for implementation.

The Market Analysis and Development section shall include detailed market research to determine true segmentation of retail, industrial and recreational needs of the city and clarify current and potential target markets for business and industry recruitment. This section will review existing economic, demographic and housing information, identify available and potential commercial space, and provide plans for developing space of under-utilized properties. The plan will compare findings with competitive markets in the Florida Panhandle and adjacent metro areas and provide possible recruitment solutions. The plan will define the true primary, secondary and tertiary markets for the city and define consumer patterns now and project scenarios of future market growth. The plan will provide tangible support of development by defining current and future market trends, industry needs and workforce requirements. The plan will detail development opportunities, business support services, targeted business needs, and marketing and recruitment strategies to provide tools needed when engaging prospective corporate investors.

The Workforce Development section will examine ways to expand career opportunities for all DeFuniak Springs residents. This section must focus on identifying the key components of the current job market, focusing on gaps in industry and skillsets of the community. It is not enough to identify jobs currently available; this plan must examine population trends and extrapolate out from current data a plan for foreshadowing the needs of the workplace in the next ten plus years. Walton County is growing percentage wise at an amazing rate due to our location, cultural environment and quality of life expectations. This plan must identify the population growth sectors and analyze the basic, intrinsic, career field and lifestyle needs of this population. This analysis will be the basis for how DeFuniak Springs develops a workforce plan. Due to a significant dependence on beach-oriented tourism, there is limited year-round business and industry within DeFuniak Springs, therefore, the plan will target specific sectors to locate, grow, and expand in the city. This will help diversify and strengthen the community by establishing a thriving year-round economy. In regions close to DeFuniak Springs, there are emerging opportunities in medical services, distribution, computer system design and related services, testing laboratories, manufacturing and professional services. Most of these industries do not have a significant presence in the city, but are establishing a presence in the region, which makes them industry sectors that can create opportunities for DeFuniak Springs. Generally, these opportunities require a higher degree of educational attainment, due to the specialization of these industries. Although the amount of DeFuniak Springs residents with advanced degrees is lower than the state and national averages, the three-county region has educational attainment levels that are similar to both state and national averages. Higher education locations nearness to DeFuniak Springs is another asset that can be used to support this industry field. And the projected influx of new residents over the next decade can provide valuable additions to the skilled workforce pool. This broad cluster of industries is trending upward regionally and nationally and is generally looking for areas ready

for development such as DeFuniak Springs, FL. The first and most important step in the process of building a resilient community with greater career choices and workforce development is building a plan for growth and success over the next 15-20 years. This plan must hold key success and benchmarks throughout the process, and work in conjunction with efforts of the city council and various city departments and agencies.

## GOAL 5

### A NEW OR RENOVATED MUNICIPAL COMPLEX

#### OVERVIEW

The current City Hall of the City of DeFuniak Springs was dedicated in 1967 and has served the city well for over 50 years. The CRA will look at several options, including 2015 City of DeFuniak Springs City Hall Evaluations prepared by Preble Rish, Inc, to renovate or build new a Municipal Complex for the City of DeFuniak Springs, FL. The current city hall and annex building resides at 71 US Highway 90, situated on 2.7 acres of municipally owned land. The current total occupiable space is 7,873 square feet with 46 parking spaces. A future use evaluation has determined that 15,000-20,000 square feet is needed to adequately house the current municipal government and allow for future departmental growth and meet the growing needs of the citizenry of DeFuniak Springs. This would allow for a larger Chamber Hall to accommodate 100 community attendees and modernize the public facilities of the building. The new Municipal Complex will house offices for: The City Council, Mayor, City Manager, City Clerk, Grants, Human Resources, Building Department, Finance Department, Parks and Recreation, Planning Department, Utility Billing, Code Enforcement, and Community Redevelopment Agency.

Additionally, a feasibility study will be done to determine the best course of action to deliver a new or renovated City of DeFuniak Springs Police Station and Holding Facility. The current facility has served the community well and outlasted the expected time of use by the City Police Department. A study will be conducted to advise the CRA and City Council of DeFuniak Springs as to the best practice in delivering a new or renovated Police Station. This will include possible new locations, renovations to the current City Hall to house the Police Department and, if a new City Hall is built, building a new Police Department in conjunction with the City Hall construction.

The key steps to this project are finalizing if a new Municipal Complex is feasible, building a guiding master site and construction plan, solidifying funding for construction, and establishing a timeline for all deliverables.

#### Performance Criteria

1. The CRA, along with the city administration, elected officials and community, must build a list of desired locations for the new complex. The list should be no more than five and no less than three. Once built, the final location should be determined through criteria agreed upon by the CRA, city administration, and elected officials.
2. An architect firm should be hired to design a new municipal complex to fit the desired new location and provide a minimum of three alternatives for design of the new complex.

3. Funding options should be discussed, evaluated and approved by the community.

### Desired Results

The ultimate outcome of this goal should be a new municipal complex, able to house the majority of the city departments and offer the community ample facilities for meetings, discussions and town hall workshops. The facility may also offer space for lease by private groups by for profit and not-for-profit, if deemed appropriate.

## Goal 6

### A NEW OR RENOVATED AMPHITHEATER

#### Overview

The current DeFuniak Springs John V. Lawson Amphitheater was constructed in 1988 with a capacity of 1,371 persons on the banks of Lake DeFuniak inside Chipley Park, DeFuniak Springs, FL. During the past 31 years, the amphitheater has played host to community concerts, plays, holiday events and much more. The amphitheater has served the community well and now needs a renovation plan to bring the facility up to date. As our community grows and changes, so do the needs and expectations of the community facilities. A new feasibility plan is needed to accurately deliver the proper facility for future endeavors and understand the current and future needs for our citizenry.

The current location of the John V. Lawson Amphitheater is ideal for a renovation and no relocation plan should be considered. Instead, a comprehensive renovation plan should be built to identify the most efficient and functional design, taking into consideration the historical aspects of Chipley Park and Chautauqua Campus the Amphitheater currently reside inside.

A renovated John V. Lawson Amphitheater should function as DeFuniak Springs most important area for all outdoor events, including concerts, plays, arts, culture and recreational events. A fully renovated amphitheater should focus on meeting DeFuniak Springs' needs for the next century.

The key steps to this renovation plan are determining the optimal occupancy, facility configuration, site master plan, funding sources, and timeline for success.

## CRA COMMUNITY PROGRAMS

### OVERVIEW

The intent of the DeFuniak Springs Community Redevelopment Agency is the strategic reinvestment of tax revenues into the CRA Area, engaging both public and private partnerships in a varied list of objectives laid out in this plan. This plan holds the initial redevelopment objectives, capital improvement projects and initiatives for the CRA. Large capital improvement projects, those impacting the majority of the citizens, will require more funding and will take precedence over other, less impactful projects or programs. The three capital improvement projects housed in this plan reflect the deep concern the citizens of DeFuniak Springs have for the public spaces, both historic and non-historic, inside the municipality. Each capital project is key to realizing the goals held in this plan and should be looked upon as attainable in the near future. Throughout this process, and as new opportunities are made known, strategic plans are reevaluated and funding is refined, the order and urgency of projects may realign. Yearly objectives and quarterly reviews will be held to evaluate and prioritize activities coordinated by and through the CRA.

The DeFuniak Springs Community Redevelopment Agency anticipates future projects and programs that further the mission of the plan, and will evaluate each on merit, scope and impact before, during and after adoption or rejection. Additionally, the current list of goals will be reevaluated annually and quarterly to ensure consistency throughout the redevelopment process.

The DeFuniak Springs Redevelopment Agency is aware that no one agency can or should bear the full burden of cost for redevelopment and the CRA will not fully fund any projects or programs, even those on public property or the public right of way. The CRA will make every effort to partner with both public and private partners whenever possible. The CRA will pursue partnerships with the City of DeFuniak Springs, Walton County Commissioners, Florida Department of Transportation, Florida Department of State, Florida Department of Economic Opportunity, local and regional utility providers and others. During such partnerships, the CRA can fund incremental cost for portions of capital improvements or programs related to redevelopment inside the CRA District.

The DeFuniak Springs Community Redevelopment Agency believes in a strong Return On Investment for the citizens of DeFuniak Springs. By partnering with other groups, both public and private, the CRA can leverage the limited funds available through incremental financing and create a much larger impact in redevelopment for the City of DeFuniak Springs. Annually, the CRA will provide the community a report on all projects, completed and ongoing, with a report on capital expenditures, partnership agreements and return on investment breakdowns by project and by investor.

### HOME AND BUSINESS PAINTING PROGRAM

This program allows owners and renters to improve the exterior of their buildings through a new coat of paint. The program allows the owner to share the cost of painting and/or pressure cleaning and existing building within the DeFuniak Springs CRA.

#### Program objectives

- Enhance the physical appearance of residential structures with the CRA.
- Eliminate the prevent the spread of slum and blighted conditions.
- Increase property values in residential neighborhoods with the CRA.
- Stimulate private investment in residential areas within the CRA.
- Stabilize residential areas within the CRA district by encouraging owner-occupancy and long-term tenancy.

To qualify for the façade improvement grant the business or home must be located within the City of DeFuniak Springs Community Redevelopment Area. The CRA will reimburse a percentage set by the CRA, the business or home owner for a project. The cost of the funds is distributed on a first-come, first-serve basis.

All property owners and residents in the Community Redevelopment Area are eligible to participate in the program. For all residents who do not own their property, a letter from the owner giving permission to the applicant for repainting will suffice.

#### **BUSINESS IMPROVEMENT REIMBURSEMENT PROGRAM**

The Business Improvement Program provides matching funds for exterior design and improvements to both commercial and multi-family residential properties in the CRA.

#### Program Objectives

- The elimination of blighted influences.
- Physical and economic revitalization of the neighborhoods and commercial areas.
- The promotion of historic preservation and maintenance of the historic character of moth the neighborhood and commercial areas.
- To improve the appearance of the area.
- Improve visual appearance of existing structures.

#### Program Description

- Provide grants for correcting code issues in buildings.
- Provide grants to property owners or their tenants for rehabilitating commercial and residential structures.
- Provide architectural, landscape architectural and engineering design technical assistance for residential and commercial structures.

#### **NEIGHBORHOOD IMPROVEMENT INITIATIVE**

The well-being of the neighborhoods is critical to maintaining the character of the City. The City has therefore established the revitalization of neighborhoods as a primary goal with the Neighborhood Improvement Program being

an important tool in aiding the revitalization process. To date this program has proved to be one of the most successful of the CRA's programs, contributing to revitalization of the downtown.

#### Program Objectives

- Elimination of blighting influences.
- Physical and economic revitalization of the neighborhoods.
- Redevelopment of the historic commercial areas.
- Promote historic preservation and maintain the historic character of the neighborhoods.
- Provide sites for historic buildings displaced by redevelopment.
- Improve the safety and appearance of the area.
- Improve the livability of the neighborhoods.
- Encourage neighborhood identity or themes.
- Improve public space, including streets, parks and other improvements, to encourage private investments

#### Program Description

- Acquire problem properties, rehabilitate and resell.
- Establish a maintenance and clean-up program to eliminate trash, unsightly structures and other blighting influences.
- Establish added security for the neighborhoods with the police department and neighborhood associations.
- Provide grants and loans for correcting code issues in existing buildings.
- Acquire single-family and multi-family structures for conversion to single-family home ownership.
- Provide grants and loans to homebuyers for rehabilitating blighted and/or historic residential structures for home ownership.
- Provide architectural assistance for new construction and rehabilitation of existing structures.
- Establish a program for developing and installing themed signs, landscaping and other.
- Provide architectural and engineering design technical assistance for residential and commercial structures.
- Provide matching funds with the private sector for public improvements.

### **SITE AND BUILDING DEVELOPMENT PLAN**

The Site and Building Development Program provides assistance for site development on a case-by-case basis for private development and redevelopment projects, including site design and engineering.

#### Program Objectives

- Encourage private redevelopment initiatives by providing assistance to overcome technical, administrative and economic obstacles to site development of selected projects within current CRA projects;
- Increase investment within current CRA projects;
- Provide economic stimulation and increase investment in the CRA.

## Program Description

In order to preserve the City's heritage, the CRA may provide grants for the relocation of structures. These grants may be paid to the property owner in annual installments, equal to a percentage of the tax increment revenue received by the CRA due to the increased assessment on the property where the structure has been relocated. The CRA Board will maintain policy guidelines regarding grant limits, annual payment amounts (based on percentage of TIF revenue) and time frame over which the grant is to be paid.

To assist larger redevelopment projects, the CRA may also provide the following:

- Grants to developers paid in annual installments, equal to a percentage of the tax increment revenue received by the CRA due to the increased assessment on the property.
- Credit enhancement to developers wherein the CRA pledges its full faith and credit to the developer's lender for payment of a portion of the loan. The enhancement may be a percentage of the loan amount or a pledge to provide adequate debt service coverage.
- In order to qualify for either the grant or the credit enhancement a redevelopment project must reinforce the overall CRA redevelopment effort. This may occur by creating jobs, increasing surrounding property values, preserving a historical structure, providing a cultural amenity or by another means approved by the CRA Board.
- The use of the allocated funds for individual projects shall be solely at the discretion of the CRA. The Board may set up a series of policies and guidelines for the program.
- Grant and loan programs for the improvement of commercial structures within the CRA Redevelopment Area.
- Provide architectural design fees to projects selected by the Board. The CRA Board will maintain policy guidelines regarding grant limits, annual payment amounts and time frame over which grant is to be paid.
- Provide a grant for or perform directly structural analyses, fire code deficiencies, handicap accessibility issues, and other building code issues, or repair of items found in the analysis of existing buildings selected by the CRA.
- Provide parking and traffic analysis of selected projects and provide subsidies including financial assistance for construction and maintenance. Part of the criteria for selecting a project for assistance is the ability to jointly share the use of parking by the public during off-peak times.
- Provide grants and loans for utility relocation if the relocation is deemed critical to the economic feasibility of the project and if the relocation results in an enhanced site design.
- Provides grants and loans to businesses for the purpose of attracting business to the CRA area and for moving existing businesses due to expansion or because the moving results in attracting an additional business for the CRA area.
- Provide water, sewer, impact and connection fee payment assistance for selected projects.
- Provide environmental clean-up assistance for selected projects.

## HISTORIC PRESERVATION PROGRAM

Historic downtowns and neighborhoods possess those elements that create livable, viable communities by encouraging mixed-use and more compact development by encouraging mixed-use and more compact development. Historic neighborhoods have traditionally proved themselves to stabilize and increase property values. The program's intent is to educate the general public as to the benefits of historic preservation to generate support for the CRA's preservation activities and to encourage preservation both in the neighborhoods as well as the commercial areas.

## Program Objectives

- Preserve the heritage of DeFuniak Springs.
- Use historic preservation as a tool for economic restructuring.
- Utilize historic preservation to combat and eliminate blight.
- Encourage restoration and maintenance of historic buildings.
- Maintain and restore all public historic buildings.
- Encourage the compatibility of historic structures and new structures in residential and commercial areas.
- Utilize the historical architectural styles of DeFuniak Springs as a reference for new construction styles.
- Provide sites for historic buildings displaced by redevelopment.

The City shall maintain and update its inventory of historic and archeological resources and shall encourage establishment of local historic districts and landmark designation as resources permit. The following policies will support this objective:

Policy 1.1. The Land availability for relocation. The City shall pursue making land available for relocation of historically significant buildings threatened by redevelopment.

Policy 1.2. Adaptive reuse. In revising its Land Development Code to be consistent with this Comprehensive Plan, the City shall adopt a policy or policies to encourage property owners to actively use their historical properties for homes, offices, museums, or other uses appropriate to the preservation of the building. The City shall review its land development regulations to ensure that City policies do not unduly restrict a property owner from active use of an historic property whose historic values have been preserved or restored.

Policy 1.3. Support to owners. The City shall encourage property owners of historically significant housing to seek preservation assistance through supportive educational programs, tax abatement, and assistance with State processing.

Policy 1.4. Historic preservation. The City shall encourage and cooperate with historic preservation efforts to develop and promote public programs and resources which increase awareness of historic places and cultural and historical activities.

Policy 1.5. The City shall continue utilizing historic data as identified in its City-wide survey, and may be amended from time to time, in order to promote awareness of historic places and sites.

Policy 1.6. Through its Land Development Code, the City shall continue to encourage historic preservation through voluntary means and incentives.

## **SMALL BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT AND LENDING PROGRAM**

The Small Business Development Program is designed to help facilitate the establishment of small businesses within the CRA. The program allows the CRA to provide rental subsidies that are intended to assist start-up businesses during the critical first year of operation by reducing the cost of overhead expenses.

## Program

The Business Development Program provides rent subsidies of up to one-third of the businesses monthly rent for a fixed maximum amount as specified in the application form for twelve (12) months anytime during the first 18 months of a multi-year lease. Funding is budgeted on an annual first-come-first served basis.

## Funding Limits and Eligibility Requirements

Applicants must meet all of the following requirements in order to be eligible to receive assistance:

1. Businesses must be located within the City of DeFuniak Springs CRA (Refer to the attached map).
2. Existing & New Businesses are defined as a company in operation for less than six months at the time of the application.
3. In order to qualify for funding under the Business Development Program the applicant must be one of the following:
  - a. New business venture.
  - b. Existing business relocating to the City of DeFuniak Springs from another City.
  - c. Existing business opening an additional location.
4. Businesses must be in operation for less than six months at the time the application is approved.
5. Businesses must have an executed multi-year lease (2-year minimum) for the new location within the City of DeFuniak Springs CRA area.
6. Businesses must employ a minimum of two (2) full-time equivalent W-2 employees whose wages are reported to state and federal government; a position occupied by the business owner may count toward the required job positions.
7. Businesses must be properly licensed and approved by the City of DeFuniak Springs.
8. Rental subsidies may be approved for one-third of the businesses monthly rent, based on a maximum per month that is specified on the application form. Subsidy payments will be paid in monthly installments for
9. a maximum of twelve (12) consecutive months during the first 18 months of a businesses' operation.
10. The total subsidy amount will not exceed a set amount per business as detailed in the application form.

## SITE BUILDING DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

The Site Development Assistance Program is open to existing commercial projects within the Community Redevelopment Area. The program encourages business owners to improve their existing business sites through exterior improvements and/or business expansion projects. The Site Development Grant helps defray the cost of exterior improvements and project-related engineering, architectural and permitting costs associated with building expansions and renovations.

Criteria that will be considered in the review of an application include, but are not limited to:

1. The visual impact of the project on the area;
2. The impact the project will have on property values in the area;
3. The project's probability of success;
4. The number of new jobs that the business will create, particularly for area residents; and
5. The amount of private funds being invested into the project.

### Eligible Expenses

- Fees – Site design; engineering; permitting
- Landscaping Expenses (design fees; installation; material purchases; irrigation)
- Exterior Repair, Stucco and Painting
- Roof Repair and Replacement
- Exterior lighting and related electrical work
- Exterior Signage

### Ineligible Expenses

- Any and all interior repairs or improvements
- Interior Lighting
- Interior Painting
- Purchase of equipment, inventory, furnishings, decorations, or supplies
- Purchase of real property
- Rent, lease or mortgage payments
- HVAC repair and/or replacement
- Security system repair and/or replacement

### General Provisions

The CRA has the right to approve or deny Site Development Assistance Program applications in its sole and absolute determination and evaluation, as to the benefits projected by such projects in the City of DeFuniak Springs's CRA. Priority will be given to projects that primarily involve exterior improvements or show an increase in square footage.

Grantees under this program agree to complete the project that the funding was awarded for, according to the scope of work presented in the application. Furthermore, all work must be done in compliance with the City of DeFuniak Springs ordinances and regulations and must have appropriate permits and Certification of Completion issued.

Applicants are encouraged to meet with CRA staff to discuss their project qualifications and eligibility for reimbursement under the program before applying.

### **LAND ACQUISITION PROGRAM**

The Land Acquisition Program will acquire properties for the purpose of fulfilling the objectives of the CRA and accelerate the redevelopment process by assembling land for redevelopment. This may constitute certain property being resold or leased to the private or public sector or assisting an area that may need the CRA as a catalyst to commence redevelopment.

### Program Description

- Acquire land for any CRA program established in the CRA Redevelopment Plan;

- Dispose of land in any manner that meets the test of redevelopment;
- Hold property for a period of time sufficient to accomplish redevelopment purposes;
- The CRA may sell or lease, as defined in the State Statutes, property for less than the fair market value;
- The CRA may transfer property to the City equal to, less than, or greater than its basis;
- The CRA may donate property for a public purpose; and
- The CRA may purchase property from the City.

#### Potential Land Acquisition Sites

The City will consider any site within the CRA area to acquire with particular emphasis on properties that are underutilized, underperforming, dilapidated structures and sites that have remained stagnant or vacant over a lengthy period of time.

## NEIGHBORHOOD IMPACT REPORT

### Florida Statute 163.362 (3)

If the redevelopment area contains low or moderate-income housing, contain a neighborhood impact element which describes in detail the impact of the redevelopment upon the residents of the redevelopment area and the surrounding areas in terms of relocation, traffic circulation, environmental quality, availability of community facilities and services, effect on school population, and other matters affecting the physical and social quality of the neighborhood.

### Explanation

Florida Statute 163.362(3) sets the requirement for any and all CRA redevelopment plans effecting low or moderate-income housing to assess the impact said redevelopment will have on the residents of the area. The assessment should focus on traffic, environmental impact, community facilities and services, school population and locations, and any other pertinent effects to the neighborhoods.

### CRA Assessment

The DeFuniak Springs Community Redevelopment district contains 6,475,520 acres inside the city limits of DeFuniak Springs, FL. As with most CRA districts, the DeFuniak Springs CRA District has many land use components- commercial, residential and governmental. This mixture of uses builds a hub for both work and living spaces for retail, office and service industries and lends to a mixed-use development and district. Both residential and commercial building inventory is varied and limited, both in quality of construction and maintenance after the fact, at the time of this report.

Community redevelopment plans for DeFuniak Springs focus clearly on building a strong foundation for strengthening, supporting and growing our community through redevelopment of distressed areas, both environmental and man-made, and a strategic approach to new development across the economic spectrum. Redevelopment, restoration and remodeling along with infill projects will be the primary means for the CRA District make over with very little to no large-scale demolition and removal of existing buildings. All subsequent planning by the CRA will focus on improvements driven by economic development stability, better housing options, infrastructure, commercial property development, and the visual environment of the CRA District.

As with any construction zone, there are potentials for negative consequences before, during and after a project is completed. Traffic congestion, construction and urban noise, and congestion due to increased use of the area can

be seen as negatives, but, with proper planning and communication before, during and after a project, the CRA can mitigate dissent by hosting community meetings and considering community input during all phases of projects. Proper planning and connection to the community can alleviate most side-effects and help reap the full benefits of increased activity and development inside the CRA District. A cohesive, well-planned approach to redevelopment should solve most, if not all, negative consequences. It is the opinion of the CRA that long-term adverse impacts to residential areas inside the CRA District are not expected due to redevelopment efforts.

Throughout the CRA redevelopment process, the CRA may deem necessary the procurement of depreciated property to develop the residential, commercial and retail options inside the CRA District and draw closer to goals set forth in this plan. No property will be purchased with CRA funds without the express consent of the CRA Board of Directors and much discussion with the public at large to define the best use for property. Once purchase and redevelopment are defined and justified, CRA funds may be used for projects.

One goal of this plan is a more diverse housing stock inside the CRA District of DeFuniak Springs. The CRA will promote all housing, no matter the price point, keep to high levels of quality materials, design and construction. The CRA can and may seek opportunities to act as developer, coordinator, partner and funding stream for affordable housing options inside the CRA District. This step should help improve the CRA District's available stock of housing across the economic spectrum.

During redevelopment or construction of infill properties, there is the opportunity for adjacent properties and businesses to be impacted. The impact will be temporary and could include construction detours, noise, dust and increased construction-based traffic. While the construction impact is expected to be minimal and temporary, the benefits of redevelopment will be long-lasting and add to the quality of life for the entire community. Benefits will include but are not limited to safer streets through lighting and streetscape improvements, open communal spaces, infrastructure stability, new and diverse retail business district, and other needed improvements.

The Walton County School District is properly preparing to increase population based on projected growth rates to the county. At the writing of this plan, the CRA does not project the need for added educational infrastructure as a result of redevelopment activities inside the CRA District. The CRA plan does address the need for new or improved community facilities and has addressed each individually as a part of this plan.

The Community Redevelopment Agency of DeFuniak Springs, FL has the sole purpose of creating an economically stable, highly accessible, beautiful district for all to enjoy. All actions taken by the CRA are focused on building a highly desirable destination for residents and guests build with accessibility and walkability in mind. A community that is pedestrian and pedal friendly and focused on better commercial, retail and residential options for all citizens. Redevelopment efforts will provide programs proposed for residents, property owners, businesses and visitors of the CRA District and, in turn, the city of DeFuniak Springs, Walton County, FL, the Florida Panhandle and the Southern Region of America.

## PLAN IMPLEMENTATION

### TIMELINE

The plan described within the DeFuniak Springs CRA Strategic Plan and funded through tax increment revenues must occur within a 15-year timeframe after the fiscal year this plan is approved and adopted for the CRA District of DeFuniak Springs, FL. If, because of a lack of funding or community outcry, a project is not implemented during this 15-year timeframe, said project will be stricken from the master plan and reevaluated for possible subsequent redevelopment plans.

Upon arrival of year 15 (2033), the Community Redevelopment Agency of DeFuniak Springs, in conjunction with the City of DeFuniak Springs, will review all goals, activities and remaining projects and weigh accomplishments of the CRA versus the work outstanding. At this point, the City of DeFuniak Springs may determine to continue the CRA work or dissolve the agency in its current iteration.

### TAX INCREMENTAL FINANCING RATES AND REVENUES

The single source of revenue established by Florida Legislative Statute for CRA funding is tax increment financing, but the CRA of DeFuniak Springs will pursue a variety of sources to meet the objectives and projects identified in this plan. By injecting alternative financing models, the CRA is capable of leveraging currency otherwise unavailable.

No person can accurately predict the exact millage rate and revenue for the DeFuniak Springs CRA District throughout the next 15 years (October 2018-October 2033), but estimates have been made in this document based on the previous ten years. A pattern of growth has been shown through examination of economic drivers inside the CRA District of DeFuniak Springs and similar CRA districts in the Florida Panhandle. The estimates are for planning only and should not be seen as completely accurate. Projected revenues should be constantly revisited as redevelopment exponentially increases property appraisals inside the CRA District. Though no estimate can be completely accurate, for this document we have based increases taxable values at 2% -4% annually.

The City of DeFuniak Springs and Walton County will deposit 95% of the amount based on the calculation of increment using the City of DeFuniak Springs millage rate in accordance with Resolution 2018-? in which the community redevelopment trust fund terms are established. With much consideration of historical data of Walton County, FL Property Appraisers collected ad valorem tax records, this plan bases projections on the following calculations:

City of DeFuniak Springs 2008-2018 millage rate: 4.50000

City of DeFuniak Springs five-year average collected tax increase: \$20,000 (1% average growth rate)

City of DeFuniak Springs three-year average collected tax increase: \$28,000 (3% average growth rate)

Estimated CRA Tax Increment Financing Revenue year one: \$20,000 - \$40,000

Estimated CRA Tax Increment Financing Revenue through year five: \$296,000 - \$608,000

Estimated CRA Tax Increment Financing Revenue through year ten: \$1,124,000 - \$2,391,000

Estimated CRA Tax Increment Financing Revenue through year fifteen: \$2,539,000 - \$5,602,000

## FINANCIAL OPERATIONS AND TRANSPARENCY

### OVERVIEW

The financial operations of the DeFuniak Springs Community Redevelopment Agency must be held to the highest standards both internally and externally to ensure public trust, transparency and mission alignment with the citizens of DeFuniak Springs. The CRA must operate under financial best practices and be transparent in every financial matter including but not limited to: the annual budget, annual reporting, audits, amendments to budgets, financial appropriations and operational spending. Financial best practices should include a timely transfer of TIF contributions, including prompt reporting of all transactions, all CRA funds are to be held inside the governmentally established CRA Trust Fund, annual reporting to the public on all financial matters reflecting revenues, spending and projections for growth, all current year unspent funding will be appropriated by September 30 of the current year per Florida Statute Chapter 163.387(7), and all current reports and records will be made available to the public on the DeFuniak Springs CRA webpage. Additionally, an activity statement of cost associated with any projected redevelopment, including any funding to be used on publicly funded capital projects or any debt incurred due in part or in whole to the proposed redevelopment if the debt will be paid with TIF revenue will be prepared and presented to the DeFuniak Springs CRA Board of Directors on or before September 30 of the current year.

### OPERATIONAL EXPENSES

The Legislature of the State of Florida through Statute 163 mandates every Community Redevelopment Agency to comply with certain expenses with very little to no deviation allowed in removing or decreasing the expense. These expenses are paid through increment financing revenues collected and deposited into the CRA Trust Fund. If appropriate, the City of DeFuniak Springs may off-set the payment of part or all of these expenses for no more than the first five fiscal years of the DeFuniak Springs CRA. At which time as the City of DeFuniak Springs ceases payment of CRA expenses, the DeFuniak Springs CRA will enter into a reimbursement agreement with the City of DeFuniak Springs for all funds previously paid by the city on behalf of the CRA. It is the goal of the DeFuniak Springs CRA is to minimize operational expenses. For this purpose, the operational expenses of the DeFuniak Springs CRA should never exceed 45% and project that as redevelopment continues and revenues increase, total operational expenses will decrease to less than 40% year over year. At no time can previous year appropriated funds be used for the purpose of paying operational expenses. All operational expenses must come from the current year TIF revenues.

## PLAN MODIFICATION DISCLAIMER

The Redevelopment Plan inside this document may, at any time, be modified in a manner consistent with Florida Statute

163.361 and the majority vote of the Community Redevelopment Agency Board of Directors. All amended areas of the plan will be made known for public discussion and comment and a public hearing will be held no less than 30 days before any vote on amendments shall take place. The DeFuniak Springs CRA Board of Directors will take into account any and all comment from the public and governmental bodies wishing to express their opinion on the proposed amendment.

### Provision of Severability

If, upon careful examination, any part of this plan is deemed unconstitutional or illegal in form or construct, the part in question shall not affect in any way the remaining part or portion of the redevelopment plan set forth in this document.

### Plan Conformity

The DeFuniak Springs Community Redevelopment Agency Redevelopment Plan in this document is designed to work in conjunction with and help fulfill the City of DeFuniak Springs and Walton County Comprehensive Plans. Every capital improvement and ongoing program will be prepared with the consideration of both comprehensive plans. All plans, both past and present including comprehensive plans, study plans, reports rendered, and improvement projects will be broadly analyzed for context and consistency throughout the CRA redevelopment process.

### Restrictions

All redevelopment plans undertaken inside the DeFuniak Springs CRA District will be reviewed by the CRA and any other applicable agencies inside the local municipality. All CRA sponsored redevelopment must adhere to all land development regulations, City and County Comprehensive Plans and the DeFuniak Springs CRA Plan.

All issues concerning redevelopment of property inside the CRA District will be heard in open form at the earliest DeFuniak Springs CRA Board of Directors meeting after such time as the issue has been made known to the public at large. Any issue concerning a restriction placed on a property acquired by the CRA for redevelopment and subsequently returned to the private sector should be addressed on an individual basis hence ensuring all activities to further redevelopment initiatives are consistent with the CRA Redevelopment Plan.

## Conclusion

The DeFuniak springs Community Redevelopment Agency has put forth a redevelopment plan housed inside this document for the sole purpose of building a more economically, socially, and environmentally stable and sustainable community and delivering a higher quality of life for all citizens of DeFuniak Springs and the surrounding area. To better perpetuate this mission, all parties involved, governmental leaders, social leaders, business owners, property owners and all residents, must do their part to support redevelopment efforts put forth in this document and subsequent projects agreed upon hereafter. The redevelopment plan for the CRA District for the City of DeFuniak Springs is based on 15-year projections. This timeline allows adequate build-up for efforts and funding to be attained, plans to be formulated and action to be taken with reevaluation built in as a review to help re-center, if necessary, the focus of the CRA. The anticipation is the CRA will find need to update or amend this plan as new information and community input is realized. Through Tax Increment Financing, the CRA Fund will use revenues to support some, but not all cost associated with a given project and look to both public and private partners to subsidize efforts for redevelopment. The CRA Board of Directors will continue to be open and transparent in the operations of the Community Redevelopment Agency and make every stride to keep the citizens of DeFuniak Springs well informed as to the process and procedures taking place throughout redevelopment.

Exhibit A Map

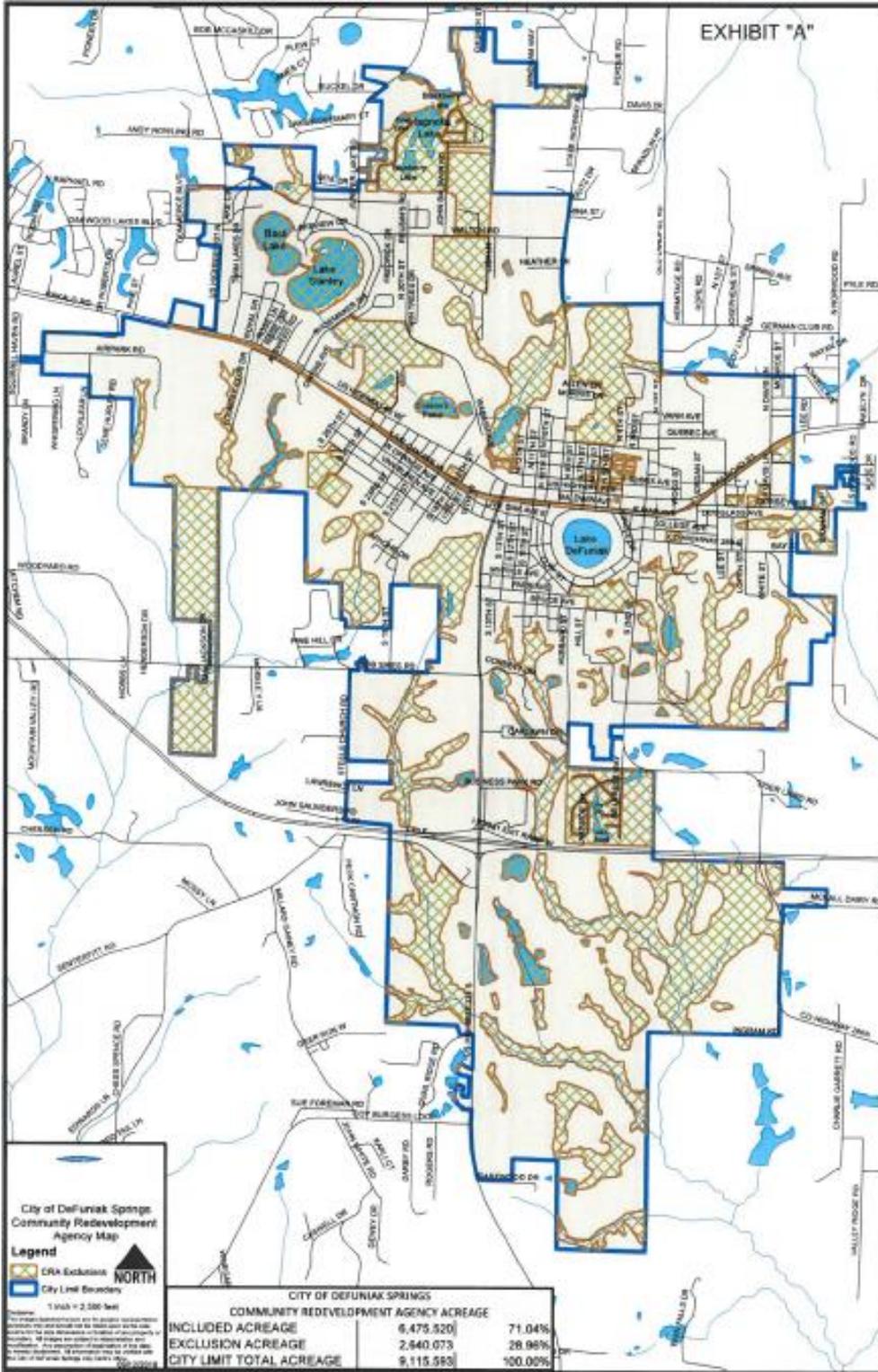


Exhibit B

TIF Projected Revenue Charts

2% growth year over year

Column1	Year	Taxable value	millage rate	Collectable value	TIF Fund Revenue Current year	5/10/15 year Cumulative Revenue
Base Year	2017	\$225,000,000.00	4.5	\$1,012,500.00	0	
	2018	\$229,500,000.00	4.5	\$1,032,750.00	\$19,237.50	
	2019	\$234,090,000.00	4.5	\$1,053,405.00	\$38,859.75	
	2020	\$238,771,800.00	4.5	\$1,074,473.10	\$58,874.44	
	2021	\$243,547,236.00	4.5	\$1,095,962.56	\$79,289.43	
year five	2022	\$248,418,180.72	4.5	\$1,117,881.81	\$100,112.72	\$296,373.85
	2023	\$253,386,544.33	4.5	\$1,140,239.45	\$121,352.48	
	2024	\$258,454,275.22	4.5	\$1,163,044.24	\$143,017.03	
	2025	\$263,623,360.73	4.5	\$1,186,305.12	\$165,114.87	
	2026	\$268,895,827.94	4.5	\$1,210,031.23	\$187,654.66	
year ten	2027	\$274,273,744.50	4.5	\$1,234,231.85	\$210,645.26	\$1,124,158.14
	2028	\$279,759,219.39	4.5	\$1,258,916.49	\$234,095.66	
	2029	\$285,354,403.78	4.5	\$1,284,094.82	\$258,015.08	
	2030	\$291,061,491.85	4.5	\$1,309,776.71	\$282,412.88	
	2031	\$296,882,721.69	4.5	\$1,335,972.25	\$307,298.64	
year fifteen	2032	\$302,820,376.12	4.5	\$1,362,691.69	\$332,682.11	\$2,538,662.50

4% growth year over year

Column1	Year	Taxable value	millage rate	Collectable value	TIF Fund Revenue Current year	5/10/15 year Cumulative Revenue
Base Year	2017	\$225,000,000.00	4.5	\$1,012,500.00	0	
	2018	\$234,000,000.00	4.5	\$1,053,000.00	\$38,475.00	
	2019	\$243,360,000.00	4.5	\$1,095,120.00	\$78,489.00	
	2020	\$253,094,400.00	4.5	\$1,138,924.80	\$120,103.56	
	2021	\$263,218,176.00	4.5	\$1,184,481.79	\$163,382.70	
year five	2022	\$273,746,903.04	4.5	\$1,231,861.06	\$208,393.01	\$608,843.27
	2023	\$284,696,779.16	4.5	\$1,281,135.51	\$255,203.73	
	2024	\$296,084,650.33	4.5	\$1,332,380.93	\$303,886.88	
	2025	\$307,928,036.34	4.5	\$1,385,676.16	\$354,517.36	
	2026	\$320,245,157.79	4.5	\$1,441,103.21	\$407,173.05	
year ten	2027	\$333,054,964.11	4.5	\$1,498,747.34	\$461,934.97	\$2,391,559.26
	2028	\$346,377,162.67	4.5	\$1,558,697.23	\$518,887.37	
	2029	\$360,232,249.18	4.5	\$1,621,045.12	\$578,117.87	
	2030	\$374,641,539.14	4.5	\$1,685,886.93	\$639,717.58	
	2031	\$389,627,200.71	4.5	\$1,753,322.40	\$703,781.28	
year fifteen	2032	\$405,212,288.74	4.5	\$1,823,455.30	\$770,407.53	\$5,602,470.89