COMMUNITY REDEVELOPMENT AGENCY
February 23, 2009

The meeting of the Community Redevelopment Agency was called to order by Mayor David Strong at 2:00 p.m. in the Commission Chambers, 401 Park Avenue South, Winter Park, Florida.

Members present:
Mayor David Strong
Commissioner Margie Bridges
Commissioner Beth Dillaha
Commissioner Phil Anderson
Commissioner Karen Diebel (arrived at 2:21 p.m.)
Orange County Representative Stan Roberts

Also present:
City Manager Randy Knight
City Attorney Trippe Cheek
Deputy City Clerk Nancy McLean

1. Administrative Items

Motion made by Commissioner Bridges to approve the minutes of January 12, 2009; seconded by Representative Roberts. The motion carried unanimously with a 5-0 vote. Commissioner Diebel was absent.

2. Action Items

A. 2009 CRA Economic Initiative

CRA Director Sherry Gutch gave a powerpoint presentation on the 2009 Economic Investment Initiative. She explained the background and purpose and spoke about the four initiatives.

Initiative 1: Park Avenue Revitalization Program and Roundtable Series.

Ms. Gutch expressed that the Park Avenue area is the jewel of the City and is recognized throughout the United States as a model other cities emulate. Unfortunately, with the economic times and the rapidly changing market, Park Avenue is facing challenges from vacant storefronts, decreased sales and a general lack of a calculated plan for the Avenue. This will only become worse as we move into 2009.

The Park Avenue Revitalization Program and roundtable series will immediately address the Park Avenue Business District issues, challenges, opportunities and successes by looking at consumer spending and how the retail shopping experience has changed. This initiative sets the stage for the Park Avenue Area Business Improvement District Plan. She stated that City staff proposes to work with consultant Britt Beemer from America’s Research Group (ARG) on this project. Mr. Beemer is the leading expert on consumer and retail trends.

She explained that initially, the project will consist of two studies in the next six months to look at the challenges facing the Park Avenue retailers. The first study will be completed by the end of March 2009 and will include 500 surveys that will focus on those who have not shopped Park Avenue in 18-24 months; and 500 will focus on the experience of those consumers who have shopped Park Avenue. After Mr. Beemer conducts this study, there will be six three-hour roundtable series with area merchants, landlords, the City, CRA and Chamber to discuss findings, address issues and develop goals and solutions. At the end, all partners will have a clear idea for what actions,
immediate and long-term, need to be taken as consumer and retail trends continue to evolve and as Park Avenue is faced with additional regional competition. The goal is for Park Avenue to remain the leading lifestyle center in the region.

Mayor Strong commented that the goal is to eventually create a business improvement district that would need to be approved by some percentage of the property owners. Ms. Gutch commented that it would be our preference that the majority of property owners see this as a benefit and want to move forward with a special taxing district. Ms. Gutch and Assistant CRA Director Peter Moore answered questions. Commissioner Anderson stated there were two goals: the long-term goal to potentially pilot a business improvement district, and the short-term goal to figure out what is happening on Park Avenue and how to make it better.

Ms. Gutch introduced consultant Britt Beemer. Mr. Beemer explained that he serves as the Senior Director of Research at America’s Research Group, where he reviews all research and prepares and presents each strategic marketing plan. He stated that he gained worldwide acclaim for his work on how, when and why consumers select their products and services. He stated that his work has been cited in the media including The Wall Street Journal, The New York Times, etc.

He explained that his goal is to look at why people who used to shop on Park Avenue no longer do. Mr. Beemer answered questions regarding 1) how he can build relationships between retailers and landlords; 2) after information is received (from the survey) what the next steps will be; and 3) how he plans to help solve the issues on Park Avenue. Ms. Gutch answered further questions. Commissioner Bridges was concerned about our role. She stated that she was more than willing to provide the financial support, but questioned the participation and the commitment by the other partners such as the Chamber, the landlords and the merchants. She added that she did not want to see this as another study that ends up on a shelf and wanted to know the next steps going forward.

Commissioner Dillaha agreed with Commissioner Bridges and stated that she wants to see that information utilized. She commented that it would be valuable information to have so they can identify what has been going on and understand why customers have not come back. She addressed rents being an issue.

Motion made by Commissioner Anderson to approve Initiative 1; seconded by Commissioner Bridges. Representative Roberts voted no. The motion carried with a 5-1 vote.

**Initiative 2: Historic Preservation Initiative within Downtown Winter Park.**

Ms. Gutch explained that the purpose of the Historical Preservation Initiative is designed to provide an economic inducement for owners of historic properties to receive federal tax credits against their corporate income tax for brining that property up to code and/or redevelopment of that property. This initiative would place a defined area of downtown Winter Park on the National Register. She stated that Historic Preservation has become a means of providing downtown revitalization, heritage tourism and economic development.

She stated that the first step under this proposal is to educate property and business owners on what it means to be part of the National Register. The final step is to file a
National Register of Historic Places nomination for the downtown area based on the survey findings (which are almost complete). She stated it should be noted that by placing the area on the National Register there are no additional review requirements unless the historic property wants to apply for the tax credits. If a historic property chooses not to participate and apply for the credits, there are no additional codes.

Ms. Gutch addressed City staff recently mailing a letter to property owners within the proposed area to determine their level of interest. If the property owners are interested in learning more, Historic Preservation consultant Donovan Rypkema will be retained to speak to City officials and affected property/business owners on the economics of Historic Preservation. Concurrently, staff will develop an Outreach Program for property/business owners in the proposed National Register District to inform them of the potential economic benefits. Once the nomination process is complete, marketing materials will be developed and included in tourism, new resident and business promotional materials.

Mayor Strong asked about the $30,000 cost. Ms. Gutch explained that $5,000 was for the educational component (Donovan Rypkema speaking with the landlords) and $25,000 is to file for the National Register. Senior Planner Lindsey Hayes elaborated on the $25,000 filing costs. She spoke about how this tax credit assists property owners and answered further questions.

Mayor Strong expressed that he would not like to commit to anything except the first step and see where that goes. He commented that it will be helpful to have Mr. Rypkema here and believed he would cost less. Commissioner Bridges suggested that they move forward and wanted to see the educational component come forward soon.

Motion made by Commissioner Bridges to approve the Historical Preservation Initiative; seconded by Commissioner Dillaha. Ms. Gutch answered questions. Commissioner Dillaha commented that they have been talking about this for years and it helps the downtown business district because it has the historic designation. She expressed that it seems to be important and it is one of the unique features about downtown Winter Park that brings people here. She addressed the time and money already invested into this and was in favor of getting it done.

Mayor Strong commented that he would support the motion if there is a positive response from the landlords and community. Commissioner Diebel commented that she had the same reservations and wanted to know from the landowners how many would take advantage of this credit for improvement. Commissioner Bridges was not sure that sending out a letter to the landlords is enough to create the impetus for them to get the education that is offered; however, she still wanted to support moving forward. Ms. Gutch expressed that they can return in May with an update of how the educational component has gone. Mayor Strong asked Commissioner Bridges to consider changing her motion to proceed with the educational component. Commissioner Bridges amended her motion that she is supportive of the historical designation educational component, not to exceed $5,000. Commissioner Dillaha commented that she was in favor with going forward with the whole thing. Representative Roberts seconded Commissioner Bridges revised motion.

President Patrick Chapin, Winter Park Chamber of Commerce, spoke about the charm and the character of Winter Park and expressed that they have to think of it in a historical context. He believed that saying it was a historical district would have
incredible marketing value. He expressed that for the small investment of $30,000 they can get things started.

Vice President Debra Hendrickson, Winter Park Chamber of Commerce, explained that she had a store in the historic district of Pensacola, Florida and believed the historic district was the driving force as to why people came.

Commissioner Bridges restated her motion to approve the Historic Preservation Initiative in full funding as it was presented; seconded by Commissioner Dillaha. Mayor Strong commented that it was approved by the CRA with the caveat that if there were negative results from the education component we would not move forward until it could be revisited. Commissioner Bridges amended her motion to include that if there are negative results they will revisit this; seconded by Commissioner Anderson. Mayor Strong clarified that her motion was to adopt the CRA Advisory Board recommendation. Commissioner Bridges agreed. Commissioner Dillaha commented that she agreed with staff's recommendation. Upon a roll call vote, Mayor Strong, Commissioners Bridges and Anderson and Representative Roberts voted yes. Commissioners Dillaha and Diebel voted no. The motion carried with a 4-2 vote.

Initiative 3: The Avenues Revitalization Pilot Program (Main Street Program).

Ms. Gutch explained that in the last 25 years, some 1,700 communities in all 50 states have had Main Street Programs. She commented that Mr. Rypkema stated that every dollar invested in a local Main Street Program leveraged nearly $27 of other investments. She further explained the Main Street Program's comprehensive strategy assisting all major arteries of the CRA that serve as important business districts for residents and venues for entertainment, recreation, shopping, arts and culture. The Main Street Program is the most cost effective Economic Development Program throughout the United States and encompasses to work in four distinct areas: design; economic restructuring; promotion and organization. She stated that six targeted CRA avenues have been identified to be part of the Main Street Program this year.

She spoke about the results of the plans being developed for all six corridors except for the Park Avenue area for which a Business Improvement District Plan will be developed. She commented that these tools will create successful business districts and commercial corridors when implemented. She expressed that staff recommends approval of this initiative and recommends they work with Tanja Gerhartz on the Main Street Program. She stated that Ms. Gerhartz has over 20 years of planning and economic development experience and created the Main Street Program in Orlando.

Mayor Strong commented that he was having trouble distinguishing this from what Mr. Beemer is doing. Ms. Gutch explained the difference. He stated that he would like to see what the City of Orlando is doing. Ms. Gutch expressed that she could send him all the information related to the Program. Mayor Strong stated that he was not prepared to pursue this until he knows more about it. Ms. Gutch answered further questions and suggested to table this and bring back a recommendation in May. Commissioner Bridges agreed with tabling this. She asked Ms. Gutch to communicate with the merchants and show them what the plan involves. There was consensus among the Commission to table this item.
Initiative 4: Economic Gardening-Virtual Business Incubation Initiative with the University of Central Florida Technology Incubator (UCFTI).

"Economic Gardening" is a new economy approach to economic development other than "economic hunting." This initiative is designed to grow and develop new and/or existing targeted businesses and create high wage/high value jobs and companies with a vested interest in the City. The initiative will provide early to second stage companies with the enabling tools and training to create financially stable high growth enterprises.

Ms. Gutch highlighted that they partnered with the University of Central Florida Technology Incubator (UCFTI) to establish a pilot virtual incubator in Winter Park. It will provide expert dedicated help related to mentoring, educating and advising in all aspects of business development and growth and allows the City to "grow its own" future successful businesses and contribute to long-term growth of our targeted industry clusters.

She explained that the Incubator provides client companies with the experience and insight needed to create successful companies. She stated that by growing our own companies we are growing our own workers that have a vested interest in the City that helped to nurture them. She also stated that the high value, high wage companies grown within the City will therefore provide jobs with average incomes of over $60,000 per year.

Director Tom O'Neal, UCF Business Incubation Program, explained that we will have access to the Incubator Program and that clients get to participate in seminars without any extra costs. Mr. O'Neal and Ms. Gutch answered questions. Representative Roberts stated that he was very impressed with the Center. He commented that they will not have any costs other than the fees to UCF. Mr. O'Neal addressed that they could set up a cost reimbursable contract and can bill the City by the hour.

Commissioner Diebel commented that she would feel more comfortable understanding the results of Mr. Beemer's study. She wanted to understand how Initiatives 1 and 4 could interconnect better. Commissioner Bridges stated that Initiative 1 focuses on retail and Initiative 4 focuses on identifying targeted industries to fully integrate our community with a stable economic base. She did not see these as being connected. Commissioner Diebel commented that she was trying to find some overlap since they are doing three specific studies. She did not believe they were overlapping to give us an economic plan that is helpful to the consumer base, business base and the Main Street Program.

Commissioner Diebel suggested they table this item. She commented that she is seeking specific examples of where this has worked and would like to see some cases represented to get a better understanding.

Representative Roberts encouraged everyone to go and look at the Center. Mr. O'Neal commented that he would be happy to give anyone a tour to see what they do. He added that they target high growth companies and they do not do retail.

Mayor Strong asked City Manager Knight to schedule a trip for the Commission so they will be better prepared to talk about it next time. Mr. Knight agreed.
3. **Informational Items**

   A. **Community Center Update.**

   Mr. Knight stated that Head Start responded to the City’s letter by saying they wanted to house 80 students from around the region or they wanted no part of the Community Center. Ms. Gutch explained that they are working with the architect to determine if they can accommodate all of the other facilities on a one floor scenario and as a result save a few million dollars.

   B. **Hannibal Square Community Land Trust.**

   Executive Director Denise Weathers, Hannibal Square Community Land Trust, spoke about their benchmark performances and the financial overview of the Land Trust. She also stated that they are having their 3rd annual meeting on February 28, from 10:00 a.m.—12:00 p.m. at the Community Center and extended an invitation to the Commissioners and the City Manager.

4. **New Business**

   There was no new business.

   The CRA Agency meeting adjourned at 3:47 p.m.

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   Chairman Kenneth W. Bradley

   **ATTEST:**

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   City Clerk Cynthia S. Bonham