

**Community Redevelopment Agency
Regular Meeting Minutes
Monday, February 12th, 2018 @ 6:00 p.m.
Council Chamber, City Hall**

1. CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Farley called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

2. ADOPTION OF AGENDA

Motion to adopt the agenda was made Vice Chairman Brown; seconded by Board member Gudis.
Motion carried unanimously.

3. PRESENTATIONS

4. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

5. APPROVAL OF CONSENT AGENDA

A. *Approve Minutes of CRA Meeting held January 8th, 2018*

Motion to approve the consent agenda was made by Board member Gudis; seconded by Board member Fitzpatrick. Motion carried unanimously.

6. PUBLIC INPUT

7. CRA ATTORNEY

8. CRA ADMINISTRATOR

A. Motion to utilize current project funding to establish a temporary connection between two land portions of the Riverwalk to give Phase 1 much better utility while waiting for RESTORE FUNDS for phase two

Background: [Agenda sheet] **Requested Motion:** Motion to utilize current project funding to establish a temporary connection between two land portions of the Riverwalk to give Phase 1 much better utility while waiting for RESTORE FUNDS for phase two.

Summary: Discussion Only --- 1) Update on Riverwalk Phase I 2) setting the tentative date for the ribbon-cutting ceremony and 3) discussion regarding a temporary overland walkway connector.

Update: Riverwalk Phase I construction is in the final stages. There are three areas that are critical for completion --- lighting, signage and paving.

Lighting: Installation of lighting is expected to be finished by February 16, 2018. Duke Energy is working to install meters at the three electrical panels. The lights in Kings Bay Park are installed and operational.

Signage: The signage is being painted and should also be completed by February 16, 2018.

Paving: The paving is scheduled for the end of the week of this hearing, weather permitting.

The substantial completion date is February 21, 2018.

Ribbon Cutting Ceremony: The Riverwalk Phase I ribbon cutting is tentatively scheduled for March 9, 2018 at 11:00 A.M.

Temporary Overland Walkway Connector: There is a gap from the main gate to the riverwalk section that goes to Kings Bay Park. Staff is looking for approval to work with the land owner to make this section of the Riverwalk useful during the phase delay. This would include temporary fencing and materials to connect the two sections. There is funding in the project reserves to cover the costs and would give the Phase one section much more utility. The owner is open to this discussion.

Staff Recommendation: Recommend approval

End of Agenda Sheet]

CRA Administrator Burnell updated Board members on the various aspects of the project, noting the staff recommendation to work with a vacant property owner to establish a temporary connection until Phase 2 completion.

Motion to utilize current project funding to establish a temporary connection between two land portions of the Riverwalk to give Phase 1 much better utility while waiting for RESTORE FUNDS for phase two was made by Board member Fitzpatrick; seconded by Board member Gudis. Motion carried unanimously.

B. Main Street Update

Background: [Agenda Sheet **Requested Motion: No motion required. Discussion regarding what would Council would like from Main Street over the next two to three years.**

Summary: As the City has been a supporter of Main Street and their projects, Council should provide feedback regarding future projects and priorities we may want them to consider.

Pump House

Assistance in vacant building

Assist in long range plan and marketing

Expanding Main Street

Others?

This is a stand-alone organization that has and is helping the community; however the City has not set out possible considerations in their support of the City.

This is a discussion item, not to finalize any requests, but to start a dialog so we do not waste time or money as we both move forward.

Staff Recommendation: Discuss openly, and does the City see the benefit to further provide funding in future years.

End of Agenda Sheet]

Main Street Executive Director Karen Peters reviewed Main Street key accomplishments including market analysis and subsequent development of the Sip'n'Stroll Event Series, the map and coin program, and the upcoming Pump House renovation project, noting a return on City's investment. Council discussion was held regarding the update as well as potential Main Street involvement with Riverwalk connectivity and vacant building registry, consideration of a "storefront" and funding sources. Discussion was also held regarding replacement of the historic walking tour signage (previously developed by Ms. Pieters).

9. COMMUNICATIONS

Board member Fitzpatrick noted the comparatively dimmer street lighting on North Citrus Avenue and CRA Administrator Burnell provided a status update on negotiations with Duke Energy to potentially upgrade that lighting. Board member Fitzpatrick also reported that Heritage House ownership will be moving forward with installation of lighting throughout the property.

Board member Gudis shared an article from Quality Cities Magazine regarding derelict properties (ATTACHMENT A).

10. BOARD MEMBERS COMMENTS

- A. *Jim Farley, Chair*

- B. *Mike Gudis*- Commented on a recent conversation with County Administrator regarding potential advancement R.E.S.T.O.R.E. Act funds.

- C. *Ken Brown, Vice Chair*- Commented on Riverwalk progress and made note of parking issues reported in the vicinity of 2nd.

- D. *Pat Fitzpatrick* – Commented on quality of kayak launch re-design and maintenance.

- E. *Robert Holmes* – Commented on quality of parks and expedience in project completions.

11. PUBLIC INPUT

Lewis Chandler- Crystal River Lions Club- Distributes information to Board members (ATTACHMENT B) and reported on the potential sale of the property adjacent to Lions Club and Depot and potential resulting issues, requesting inclusion of an item to discuss and address such issues on the next CRA agenda. CRA Administrator Burnell requested information be provided by that meeting’s agenda deadline.

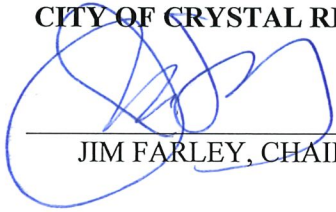
Ralph Duball-940 SE 5th Ave- Inquired if Segway’s would be allowed on the Riverwalk.

Brief Board discussion was held regarding the matter and CRA Administrator Burnell requested time for staff to research the legalities of permitting that type of vehicle on the Riverwalk.

12. ADJOURNMENT

Chairman Farley adjourned the meeting at 6:40 p.m.

CITY OF CRYSTAL RIVER



JIM FARLEY, CHAIRMAN

ATTEST:



MIA FINK, CITY CLERK



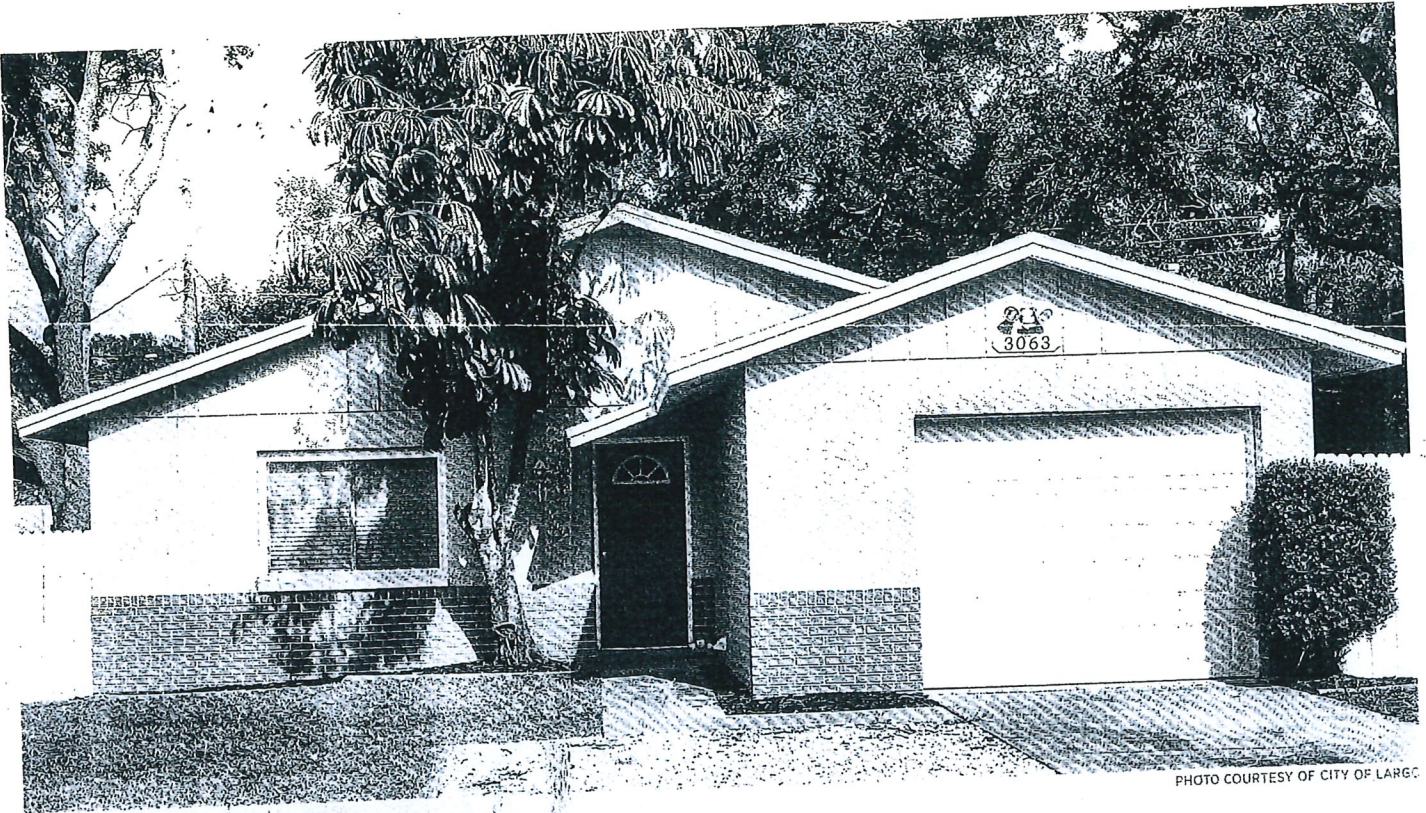
 CITY SPOTLIGHT


PHOTO COURTESY OF CITY OF LARGO

NUISANCE ABATEMENT

Dealing with Derelict Properties

Largo's lien forgiveness and purchase of abandoned houses improve neighborhoods

by Carol Stricklin
City of Largo

Almost every city has them – derelict properties with overgrown yards, broken windows and deteriorating structures. Abandoned houses, a legacy of the recession and property foreclosures, attract criminal activity, depress property values and discourage new investment. The **City of Largo** is abating these problem properties through innovative strategies including lien forgiveness and the acquisition of properties through the city's affordable housing program.

CODE LIEN FORGIVENESS

Code liens are created through the assessment of fines by the Code Enforcement Board (CEB) after a property owner fails to correct a code violation. These unresolved code enforcement cases can result in thousands of dollars in unpaid



LARGO
Pinellas County
Pop. 83,065

remain. The CEB can only reduce liens once the code violations are corrected.

Liens dissuade buyers from purchasing and fixing up properties, due to financing and title impediments. The CEB process provides no guarantee to buyers reluctant to invest in the properties because of the risk that they would not receive the lien reduction upon project completion.

Largo's **New Owner Code Lien Release Program**, created in 2016, allows new property owners or contract purchasers to administratively obtain the release of code liens. The program seeks to stabilize neighborhoods through renovation and rehabilitation of houses, and requires a

city inspection to identify any violations of the standards identified in the **Minimum Property Maintenance Code**.

The new property owners or contract purchasers enter into an agreement with the city whereby they agree to correct all code violations in return for the release of the liens associated with the properties. The new property owner must obtain permits and perform all work within 90 days. Upon successful completion and inspection of the work, the city releases the liens administratively.

The program has resulted in the renovation of four properties. Code violations dating back for more than 10 years on these properties had resulted in almost \$400,000 in code liens. One vacant house with code violations related to a structural fire in 2011 had accrued fines of more than \$140,000. An investor bought the property



for \$51,000, completely renovated it and sold it within five months for \$187,000.

One of two additional programs created in 2017, **Code Lien Forgiveness for Non-Profit Affordable Housing Organizations**, allows the city to administratively release the liens for properties purchased by qualifying organizations that intend to renovate, or demolish and replace, residential structures for use as affordable housing. The second program, **Code Lien Forgiveness for Demolition**, addresses the elimination of code violations through the removal of structures. It also allows liens to be administratively released upon demolition and the issuance of building permits for a new home.

PROPERTY ACQUISITION

The city's housing program has also addressed nuisance properties by building strong partnerships with non-profit affordable housing developers, such as **Habitat for Humanity** and the **Largo Affordable Housing Development Corporation (LAHDC)**. During the recession, financial institutions voluntarily donated abandoned properties in poor condition to Habitat for Humanity, and

the city funded demolition. Largo helps finance the purchase of derelict properties for rehabilitation or demolition and construction of replacement houses by nonprofit affordable housing developers.

Recently, the city acquired two adjacent substandard lots in the **Clearwater-Largo Road Community Redevelopment District**, both containing derelict structures. The city worked with LAHDC to acquire and combine the properties, demolish the structures and construct a new affordable house.

The city has foreclosed on properties with liens when the owner had died and no heirs were willing to take the property through probate. This process was lengthy and incurred legal costs, but ultimately resulted in the city taking possession of two properties, one of which was renovated through the city's housing program. The house on the other property was demolished and the lot donated to Habitat for Humanity, which constructed a new home.

LESSONS LEARNED

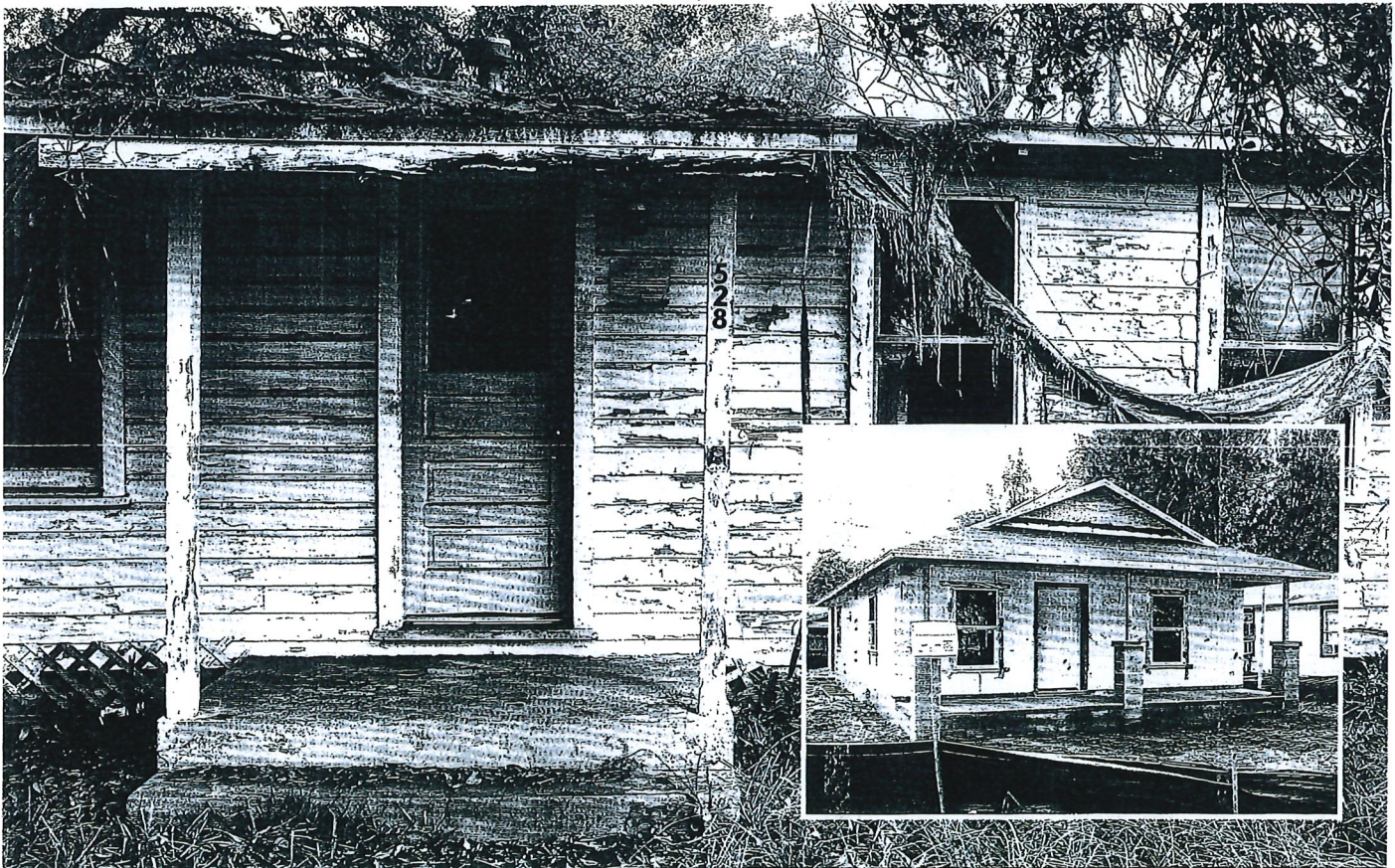
Derelict properties represent a chronic nuisance that can harm an entire

neighborhood. Code enforcement techniques are not always effective, because properties often lack clear title or are subject to unfinished foreclosure or probate proceedings. Creating a database of these properties, and focusing on individual cases for nuisance abatement, requires flexibility, as each one is different. Monitoring problem properties and city actions such as boarding or fencing hazardous properties provide only temporary relief.

The success of the city's code lien forgiveness program in revitalizing derelict properties required partnerships between code enforcement, housing and legal staff. Direct city purchase or foreclosure can serve to abate nuisance properties, but the process can be lengthy and expensive.

Creating code lien forgiveness programs provides incentives for the private and nonprofit sectors to invest in these properties, and shows great promise. Each derelict property brought back to life through rehabilitation or new construction has a lasting benefit to the quality of the city's neighborhoods.

Carol Stricklin, AICP, is community development director for the City of Largo. ☪



PHOTOS COURTESY OF CITY OF LARGO