

**PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING**  
**October 7, 2025**

Minutes for the Regular Meeting for the Planning Commission of the City of Auburndale, Florida held Tuesday, October 7, 2025, at 4:00 pm in the City Commission Room at City Hall, after having been properly advertised with the following members present Commissioners, Dave Holt, Steve Lawson, Crystal Tijerina, and Donishia Yarde. Also present was Community Development Director Julie Womble, City Planner Jesse Pearson, and Secretary Marsha Johnson. Absent were Chairman Perry Price, Commissioners Tom Dudash and Jody Miller.

Commissioner Steve Lawson declared a quorum and the Meeting was called to order and opened with the pledge to the American Flag.

**Motion** was made by Commissioner Crystal Tijerina and second by Commissioner Donishia Yarde to approve the minutes as written from the July 8, 2025, meeting. Upon vote, all ayes.

**AGENDA ITEM 1:** RECOMMENDATION - COMMUNITY REDEVELOPMENT PLAN UPDATE

Assistant City Manager Amy Palmer stated in 1992, introduced the CRA the City of Auburndale saw the need to revitalize the downtown business district and created the Auburndale Community Redevelopment Agency (CRA) and Community Redevelopment Plan. This special district is approximately 1,074 acres and encompasses the downtown core and surrounding areas. The Plan has been in place since 1992 and it has never been updated but it contains strategies to redevelop, rehabilitate, and conserve the Community Redevelopment Agency District. The CRA utilizes a financing tool known as Tax Increment Financing to fund the projects and programs identified in the Plan, which primarily address infrastructure rehabilitation, beautification efforts, and economic development. The CRA is currently set to expire in 2035 and the CRA board has expressed a desire to extend the timeframe of the CRA through its 60-year time certain expressed in State Statute, through the year 2052, adding 27 years to the life of the CRA. State Statutes require an update to the Plan to extend the operational timeframe of the CRA. In addition, the City's Auditor and Attorney have both recommended the Community Redevelopment Plan be updated. The CRA's consultant, Inspire Placemaking, held a workshop with the CRA Board on August 18, 2025, and as a result of the workshop, a review of existing conditions, and a review of the CRA's progress since 1992, have updated the CRA Redevelopment Plan. The Plan document reflects updated existing conditions, and modifies the 1992 goals, objectives, and action items to better take advantage of opportunities as they exist in today's CRA District. The Plan also includes an Appendix that reports the results of the workshop and provides The evidence of meeting Statutory requirements with Chapter 163, Part III of Florida Statutes.

CRA Presentation:

A Community Redevelopment Agency (CRA) is a special district that has been identified as being in economic and/or physical distress and needing improvement. The CRA boundary is established through a process called a Finding of Necessity assessment, which reports conditions of "slum and blight" per Florida State Statutes. These conditions may include vacant or dilapidated buildings or properties; tax delinquency; broken sidewalks and streets; fire or flooding hazards; or other issues. A CRA receives funds to make improvements. This is primarily through Tax Increment Financing (TIF). CRA Funds can only be used on projects that are within the CRA boundaries and listed in the Redevelopment Plan. It is funded by a tool called Tax Increment Financing.

The History of the Auburndale CRA:

The CRA was established in 1992 with an operational timeframe out to 2012. In 2005, the CRA timeframe was extended to 2035. The CRA is now seeking an operational timeframe extension to 2052. The goal of this effort is to refresh the Plan and set up the CRA for success through the end of 2052.

At this time slides were shown of past CRA projects in the past: PK streetscape improvement, Howard Street Property, Concrete Planters, Gateway signage, Antique lighting, clock tower and Park Street Property.

There was a review of the existing 1992 Redevelopment Plan asking what strategies have worked, what has been accomplished, what isn't relevant anymore and what are potential new goals and strategies. Also, existing conditions & data analysis.

On August 18, 2025 the CRA Board workshop was held at City Hall. Input included: Preserve small-town character while modernizing, Unify downtown physically and aesthetically, Pedestrian connectivity & experience, Bolster Auburndale's recreation centered identity and expand business & entertainment options.

Opportunities were: Bridging the Gaps, Improve connectivity, safety, and walkability through streetscape and mobility investments that unify the CRA and enhance access. Thinking Small to Make Big Strides with support small businesses and unique local establishments to strengthen downtown's identity and economic vitality. Becoming Move in Ready to invest in code enforcement and missing middle housing to meet demand and stabilize neighborhoods.

#### Goals and Strategies Updates

Keep the essence of the original 1992 CRA Plan – Revise goals and strategies that were no longer relevant – Modernize language and broaden opportunities.

Unify Auburndale's Physical Form – Create a consistent quality and hometown appearance of buildings and streets – Establish and maintain a pleasant, safe pedestrian environment.

Maintain United Leadership and Direction – Advance planning and positioning for continued economic development and revitalization. –

Maintain a Sense of Vitality – Install beautification elements and community – friendly upgrades.

#### CRA Plan: Consistent with the Comprehensive Plan

Consistency with Comprehensive Plan: Future Land Use Element – Goal 1: to provide for organized and compatible land uses that are sensitive to the environment, fiscally responsible, meet the social, economic and physical needs of present and future residents and protect the anticipated quality of life as a result of choosing to live in the City. Goal is to unify Auburndale's Physical Form. Objective is to create a consistent quality and hometown appearance of buildings and streets. Development Location – The City of Auburndale shall promote contiguous and compact growth patterns through the development process to minimize energy costs, conserve land, water, and natural resources, minimize the cost of services, and prevent development patterns where tracts of land are by-passed in favor of development more distant from service and existing communities.

Consistency with Comprehensive Plan: Transportation Element – Objective 1 Convenient and Efficient Transportation System – The City shall provide a safe and adequate multi-modal transportation system for its residents and users. Objective 2. Sidewalks, Bikeways and Trails – The City will continue to increase the amount of sidewalks and bikeways within the City Limits.

Consistency with Comprehensive Plan: Housing Element – Objective 2: Elimination of Substandard Housing Conditions – The City of Auburndale shall improve the structural and aesthetic condition of the City’s housing stock. The City will actively pursue the rehabilitation or elimination and replacement of up to 10 substandard housing units per year through the 2030, by use of federal, state, county, or private funding sources. Substandard Dwelling units shall be any dwelling unit lacking complete plumbing or sanitary facilities for the exclusive use of the occupants; or a unit which is in violation of one or more major sections of an applicable housing code and where such violation poses a serious threat to the health of the occupant; or a unit that has been declared unfit for human habitation but that could be rehabilitated for less than 50 percent of the property value 420,004 (13) (a-c) F.S. Also, a substandard dwelling unit is one that does not have an adequate level of exterior maintenance to ensure that roof, walls, windows, doors and foundation slab will withstand normal weather conditions to preclude visible structural deterioration.

Consistency with Comprehensive Plan: Recreation Element – Objective 3: Ensure Adequate Provision of Recreation Facilities – The City shall ensure consistency with the adopted level of serve standards for the provision of future recreation facilities.

Overall Comprehensive Plan Consistency – Overall Vision: The CRA’s goal and efforts are to make the downtown Auburndale CRA a more attractive place to live, work, and recreate, in a community of strong identity and business vitality, improving the overall success of the City.

The Plan has been drafted in accordance with Florida State Statutes Chapter 163 and is in compliance with the City of Auburndale’s Comprehensive Plan. The Plan has been reviewed by the City Attorney, City Manager’s Office, Community Development Director, and CRA Board. The Final Plan will be presented to the CRA Board for a recommendation on October 20, and then to the City Commission for adoption on November 3, 2025. Staff Recommends approval of the update to the Community Redevelopment Plan, finding the Plan in compliance with the Comprehensive Plan.

Commissioner Steve Lawson asked for a motion.

**Motion** was made by Commissioner Danisha Yarde and second by Commissioner Crystal Tijerina to approve the update to the Community Redevelopment Plan, finding the Plan in compliance with the Comprehensive Plan.

Commissioner Crystal Tijerina stated that she had the opportunity to attend the workshop and that it was very thought-provoking.

Commissioner Steve Lawson asked about grants for businesses to help them revitalize. Is there any type of help for residents in beautifying the area if it is under some type of code enforcement.

Assistant City Manager Amy Palmer stated we have not addressed any type of residential grants or loans. The plan today focuses on commercial and business. Only if it was on the second floor of some of the downtown buildings. That would be the only residential type. The code enforcement that we are considering is for the entire CRA district, for commercial as well as residential.

Upon vote, all ayes.

Commissioner Steve Lawson closed the Regular Meeting and opened the Public Hearing.

**AGENDA ITEM 2: PUBLIC HEARING – SMALL SCALE FUTURE LAND USE AMENDMENT – POLK REGIONAL WATER COOPERATIVE**

City Planner Jesse Pearson stated the Planning Commission will consider and take public comment on a Future Land Use Map amendment before making a recommendation to the City Commission.

Notice of Public Hearing – 09/26/2025

The City has received a request for a Future Land Use Map Amendment on the following property:

**Water Cooperative Property:**

**Owner/Petitioner:** Eric DeHaven of Polk Regional Water Cooperative (PRWC)  
**Location:** Derby Ave. and Rose St.  
**Current City Zoning:** Open Use Agriculture (OUA)  
**Current City Future Land Use:** Medium Density Residential  
**Proposed City Future Land Use:** City, Public Uses, Parks  
**Current use:** Vacant (+/- 1.0078 acres)

In 2017 Polk County and fifteen municipal governments formed the Polk Regional Water Cooperative (PRWC) to lead planning for future water demands. This request is to amend +/- 1.0078 acres of the Future Land Use Medium Density Residential to City, Public Uses, Parks to allow for a booster pump station to facilitate future water demands for the area. The project will include a booster pump station and water storage tank. The facilities are owned and operated by the Polk Regional Water Cooperative (PRWC) and will be used to repump water into the City of Auburndale's distribution system. A 6' masonry wall will be required along Derby Ave. to buffer against residential uses adjacent on the south side of Derby Ave. The Future Land Use of City, Public Uses, Parks applies to all City, County State and Federal lands within the City. This includes parks, offices, municipal buildings, utilities and public lands. The proposal is also consistent with existing City zoning of Open Use Agriculture (OUA). This zoning category allows for Public parks, playgrounds, playfields, and city buildings in keeping with the character and requirements of the district. Open spaces, park lands, water sheds and water recharge areas are also intended to be protected in these districts. Following public comment, the proposed amendment will be considered by the Planning Commission for a recommendation to the City Commission. Staff recommends approval of the proposed Future Land Use of City, Public Uses, Parks to the City Commission. At this time the map was shown on the screen.

Commissioner Steve Lawson asked for public comment, there was none.

Commissioner Steve Lawson closed the Public Hearing and re-opened the Regular Meeting.

**AGENDA ITEM 3:** RECOMMENDATION AMENDING THE FUTURE LAND USE

**Motion** was made by Commissioner Crystal Tijerina and second by Commissioner Donisha Yarde to approve the proposed Future Land Use of City, Public Uses, Parks to the City Commission.

Commissioner Donisha Yarde asked about the buffer.

City Planner Jesse Pearson stated we are required to have a masonry wall.

Commissioner Dave Holt asked about the yellow area on the map.

City Planner Jesse Pearson stated it is medium density residential with a retention pond, difficult to develop.

Commissioner Dave Holt asked about the future of this lot.

City Planner Jesse Pearson stated it was up to Polk County.

Mr. Mark Addison stated he is the project manager for PRWC for the Southeast Well Field Project. This pump station is part of that project. His understanding is that the County purchased this property to develop it into a park.

Upon vote, all ayes.

**AGENDA ITEM 4: PRELIMINARY PLAT – GAPWAY LAKES ESTATES**

Community Development Director Julie Womble stated the City has received a preliminary plat from Mathew Johnson, PE of JSK Consulting on behalf of the Gapway Grove Corporation for a 45-lot single-family dwelling development on +/- 42.74 acres located on Gapway Road, a County Road. The preliminary plat has been reviewed by all City Departments and meets all City Codes and Land Development Regulations. The property is located within the Lakes District Mixed Use Future Land Use and is zoned Estate Residential (ER) and meets or exceeds all Land Development Regulations, including minimum lot size, minimum setbacks, and minimum house size. The Estate Residential (ER) zoning classification allows for a more rural development pattern which recognizes unique environmental conditions. The district allows residential development with a gross density of 1 dwelling unit per 1 acre; parks, recreation, and open space; public or private golf courses; and agriculture. Estate Residential neighborhoods may be a Transfer of Development Rights (TDRs) sending zone. The minimum lot size proposed is 1 acre with a minimum dwelling unit floor area of 2,200 sq. ft. setbacks will be; Front 35 feet, Side 15 feet, Rear 15 feet. Minimum separation between primary buildings shall be 15 feet. Access to the subdivision will be from Gapway Road, a Polk County maintained road. Six-foot sidewalks will be provided on both sides of the street. All retention areas, roads, sidewalks, and open spaces will be dedicated to and maintained by the Homeowner's Association. The City's water and sewer system is available in this area for connection. Following the Planning Commission's recommendation, the preliminary plat will go to the City Commission for approval. Preliminary plat approval by the City Commission allows the developer to proceed with construction plan approval and final plat approval. Staff recommends approval of the Preliminary Plat to the City Commission.

**Motion** was made by Commissioner Crystal Tijerina and second by Commissioner Dave Holt to approve the Preliminary Plat – Gapway Lakes Estates to the City Commission.

Upon vote, all ayes.

Meeting was adjourned at 4:40 p.m.

I HEREBY CERTIFY that the foregoing minutes are true and correct.

  
Marsha Johnson, Secretary