



COMMUNITY REDEVELOPMENT AGENCIES – TRANSFORMING NEIGHBORHOODS, ECONOMIES

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Palm Beach County's economic development programs work hand-in-hand with our affordable housing and community redevelopment efforts, all housed under the Department of Economic Sustainability (DES). With much of the funding originating from federal programs, business development, housing, and public facility and utility infrastructure serve as the building blocks for sustainable communities and create an environment suitable for economic growth.

A prime example of how those investments generate economic rebirth is within the unincorporated area known as the Westgate Belvedere Homes Community Redevelopment Area (Westgate CRA). The Westgate CRA is situated on the north side of Belvedere Road across from the Palm Beach International Airport and is bordered by Florida Mango Road to the east, Okeechobee Boulevard to the North, and Military Trail to the west. It was created by the Board of County Commissioners in May of 1989 to encourage redevelopment of this central-county community, which had long-suffered from blight and a lack of basic infrastructure and investment.

Over the past 25 years, Palm Beach County has financially supported projects to install water and sewer lines, paved roads, curb/gutter and sidewalks on Westgate Avenue, storm-water drainage, dry retention ponds, canal widening improvements, and neighborhood parks, including more than \$9 million in federal funds just in the past five years. In May of last year, the Westgate CRA dedicated the Dennis P. Koehler Preserve, a large retention pond with surrounding culverts and inlets to filter the storm-water before it discharges into the C-51 canal, which includes a surrounding bird sanctuary and natural eco-art elements.

State disaster recovery funds administered through DES have made it possible to redevelop housing that had suffered damage beyond repair from hurricanes, and additional federal dollars were invested both in rehabilitating vacant and foreclosed residential properties, and in partnership with private industry to develop Westgate Plaza Apartments, a new 80-unit, energy-efficient rental apartment community exclusively for seniors.

The Westgate CRA and its agency board have implemented programs to encourage commercial development including reimbursements to businesses for a portion of their site development costs, and other incentives to attract projects that meet the goals of the CRA's 2005 Amended Redevelopment Plan. Further, the CRA is partnering with private banks to offer grants in combination with low-interest loans to homeowners for improvements projects.

These investments are transforming the Westgate CRA's commercial corridors and neighborhoods, which make the community more desirable for business development and the quality of life better for its residents.

For more information about the county's business assistance programs, contact Sherry at DES, (561) 233-3653.