

Chair Walter Welch
Vice Chair Shirley Green Brown
Member Jacob Fletcher
Member Jennifer Ringersen
Member Dayna Williams

City Manager Rodolfo Valladares
City Attorney Marian Rush

The Community Redevelopment Agency will conduct a
Special Community Redevelopment Agency Meeting
At 5:00 PM

to address the item(s) below.

Meeting Date: June 23, 2025

Meeting Location: James A. Lewis City Commission Chambers
15100 NW 142 Terrace
Alachua, FL 32615

Community Redevelopment Agency Meeting

Notice given pursuant to Section 286.0105, Florida Statutes. In order to appeal any decision made at this meeting, you will need a verbatim record of the proceedings. It will be your responsibility to ensure such a record is made.

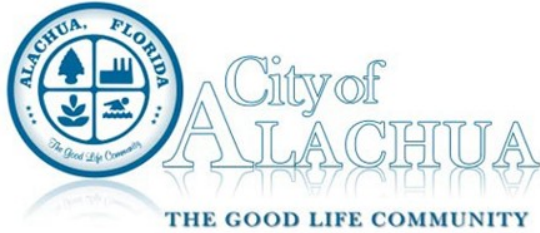
CALL TO ORDER

I. NEW BUSINESS

A) PROPOSED CONCERT SERIES FOR DOWNTOWN

B) GATEWAY SIGN ON MAIN STREET AND US-441 - PROJECT OVERVIEW

ADJOURN



Commission Agenda Item

MEETING DATE: June 23, 2025

SUBJECT: Proposed Concert Series for Downtown

PREPARED BY: Susan King

RECOMMENDED ACTION:

Receive presentation and consider approval of the CRA Advisory Board's recommendation

Summary

Proposed Concert Series for Downtown

The Levitt AMP Music Series Grant Program is a multi-year matching grant opportunity to bring free, live music to small and mid-sized towns and cities across the country. The goal of the Levitt Foundation is to “inject new life into public spaces and create vibrant community destinations.” The proposed venue must be an outdoor, underused public space that is easily accessible to people of all ages, backgrounds and socioeconomic circumstances. The concert series programming must be inclusive of all members of the community, family-friendly and showcase a diverse range of music genres.

The Levitt Foundation offers matching grants of up to \$40,000 per year (\$4,000 per concert) for a maximum grant award of \$120,000 for three years (2026, 2027 and 2028). If awarded, the grant will provide funding for 10 free concerts to take place each year of the grant period. Total matching funds, including a combination of both cash and in-kind, must equal the total grant award each year. At least 50% of matching funds must be in cash. Any on-site earned income, such as vendor fees, food and beverage sales, and on-site audience donations at the concert, may be used to benefit any of the partner nonprofit organizations.

The primary applicant must be a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization. Josh’s Place’s board of directors agreed to be the primary grant applicant. The Alachua Business League (ABL), a partner organization, will organize, promote and produce the Levitt Music Series, as well as contract with and compensate the grant writer to prepare the grant application.

At the May 19, 2025, CRAAB meeting, CRA Advisory Board made the following recommendation to the CRA Board:

- Support bringing this free concert series to Main Street Alachua;
- Approve the Alachua CRA becoming a partner organization; and
- Provide matching CRA funds for a three-year period, if the Levitt AMP Music Series

Grant is awarded, to produce and promote the "Levitt AMP Alachua Music Series" in downtown Alachua.

Staff suggests a minimum of \$20,000 be allocated from the CRA budget each fiscal year to fulfill the match requirement for the three-year grant period. A combination of in-kind donations, support from additional partner organizations and sponsorships will complete the total annual \$40,000 match requirement.

The deadline for the Levitt AMP Music Series Grant application is Monday, June 30, 2025.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

ADDITIONAL FINANCIAL INFORMATION

ATTACHMENTS

1. Levitt AMP Alachua - A Proposal Overview



Proposal Overview

Grant Foundation

Levitt Foundation

In 2025, the national Levitt network of music venues and concert sites is presenting 650+ free concerts in 45 towns and cities, with audiences over 750,000. In addition to supporting free concerts, the Levitt Foundation is dedicated to advancing equitable music ecosystems through research and partnerships.

Levitt AMP Grant

The purpose of the Levitt AMP Music Series is to bring the joy of free, live music to people of all ages and backgrounds, transforming underused public spaces into thriving community destinations. The Levitt Foundation invests in community-driven efforts that harness the power of partnerships and leverage community support. Levitt AMP concert sites reflect the character of their town or city, while benefiting from the program framework and best practices provided by the Levitt Foundation. As a participatory funder, the Foundation provides Levitt AMP grantees with financial support, as well as information exchange platforms and convenings, meaningful tools and resources to help them bring their programs to life and maximize impact in their communities.

- Catalytic – to empower communities to transform neglected or underused public spaces into vibrant destinations
- Dynamic – to develop and support programs that are responsive to the needs of individual communities and spark a ripple effect of positive impact
- Joy – to create environments where the power of music and the outdoors enrich individual lives and bring people together for socializing, dancing and exposure to the arts
- Inclusivity – to champion free programming, with multiple opportunities to attend, in accessible open lawn settings where all feel welcome
- Connectedness – to foster opportunities for people of all ages and backgrounds to spend time together, meet, mingle and share an experience

Key Partners

Josh's Place (Primary Applicant)

Josh's Place is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit community outreach organization founded in 2021 to honor the memory of Josh Harris, a kind-hearted young electrician who faced struggles with isolation and depression. Inspired by his story, Josh's Place offers programs and services that cultivate a safe, inclusive, and welcoming space in Alachua, Florida. Their mission is realized through counseling, mentorship, peer groups, recreation programs, and public events that foster community connection.

Located less than half a mile from the proposed Levitt AMP site at Skinner Field Park, Josh's Place is a trusted and accessible hub within the community. Their proximity and strong local presence uniquely position them to lead the Levitt AMP Alachua Music Series. With a track record of hosting community dinners, open recreation events, speaker series, and volunteer initiatives, Josh's Place brings operational experience and a deep commitment to inclusion and outreach.

Alachua Business League (ABL)

The Alachua Business League, a nonprofit alliance of local business owners, is widely respected for producing the city's hallmark Main Street Festivals. Their experience in organizing large-scale public events and their broad business network make ABL an essential partner in ensuring the series' success. ABL will help plan and coordinate on-site logistics, talent selection, vendor oversight, sponsorships, and promotions—building momentum and community trust in the project.

Alachua Community Redevelopment Agency (CRA)

The CRA, governed by the Downtown Redevelopment Trust Board, brings essential strategic and logistical expertise to the Levitt AMP series. As a dedicated agency focused on revitalizing Alachua's historic core, the CRA will facilitate city approvals, site preparation, and promotional support. Their financial contribution as the series' cash match sponsor underscores a shared vision for economic revitalization and cultural enrichment in the redevelopment district.

Proposed Venue

Grant Strategy and Purpose.

The strategy for the initial grant is to present a series at Skinner Field Park. The park already has existing infrastructure with electric and restrooms, and adjacent parking at City Hall. The venue is a launching point for other development in downtown, the idea is to expand the series to Theater Park in the future thusly creating programming to support the current revitalization and infrastructure redevelopment. Too often, a government will invest in a space to great expense without a plan to activate the space for use. The viability of a space is proven through its use; no use equals a wasted

investment. Creative placemaking is a nationwide initiative to activate and revitalize spaces through alternative creative use. This can be as grandiose as a permanent interactive digital art display or as simple as market events but the Levitt Foundation specifically activates spaces through free live music because music is a universal social conductor and as the foundation’s social campaign says “music moves”. There is a spirit of friendship, inclusiveness, joy, dancing, and community at every single Levitt concert that produces concert regulars from year to year and entices catalytic improvement and investment. People want to be a part of something that feels good and businesses want to invest in it. The impact is unlike any other infrastructure project you’ve encountered.

The Proposed Venue

Skinner Field Park is centrally located at the corner of NW 150th Avenue and NW 142nd Terrace in Alachua’s historic downtown district. It is surrounded by civic and residential spaces, local businesses, and Main Street amenities. While the park currently hosts the city’s annual Christmas tree lighting, it lacks regular programming and remains underutilized.

With its playground, proximity to City Hall, and walkable access from Main Street, Skinner Field Park offers an ideal open-air venue for free concerts. Its transformation into a vibrant public space through the Levitt AMP series will support broader downtown revitalization efforts and address challenges like business vacancies and low foot traffic.

What the Levitt AMP can do

The Levitt AMP Alachua Music Series offers an exciting opportunity to:

- **Amplify Civic Pride & Local Identity:** By spotlighting Alachua’s historic downtown and fostering shared cultural experiences, the series will celebrate the city’s heritage and growing diversity.
- **Enrich Lives Through Music:** With no existing local concert series, Levitt AMP will introduce high-caliber, free music to residents who currently lack access to consistent cultural programming.
- **Activate Vibrant Public Spaces:** Weekly concerts will transform an underused park into a gathering space that welcomes residents of all ages and backgrounds, building stronger social bonds and boosting downtown vitality.

The series also addresses local needs for year-round events that support downtown businesses and improve quality of life for residents.

How it fits with CRA goals

The Levitt AMP Grant closely aligns with the goals of Alachua’s Community Redevelopment Plan (CRA) by supporting revitalization, economic development, and community engagement at and around activated concert sites. The CRA aims to enhance the vibrancy, accessibility, and economic vitality of historic downtown Alachua, and the Levitt AMP Music Series directly contributes to these objectives by activating underutilized public spaces—specifically Skinner Field Park—with free, live music that draws diverse audiences.

By attracting residents and visitors downtown, the series encourages foot traffic to local businesses, supports entrepreneurship through vendor opportunities, and promotes cultural tourism. It fosters social cohesion by creating a welcoming, family-friendly atmosphere that reflects the community's diversity. Additionally, the grant's emphasis on partnerships and volunteerism echoes the CRA's goals of collaborative community investment and capacity building.

Proven ROI

Levitt AMP has proven catalytic and economic return. Examples of this return at existing Levitt Cities demonstrate the power of creative placemaking.

Levitt AMP Utica (Year 11)

Prior to becoming home to the Levitt AMP Music Series, this grassy, triangular thoroughway in the Oneida Square neighborhood in upstate New York's Utica was something to drive past rather than gather at. Trash littered the area, and its infrastructure, sidewalks, and curbs were all crumbling. The park that was meant to be a hospitable outdoor public space for the surrounding community—a census tract with low household incomes and high school graduation rates—had instead, due to years of disinvestment, become inaccessible to the neighborhood.

Overwhelming community support of the annual music series led to heightened park visitation, which triggered the city to reinvest in numerous beautification projects: new sidewalks, curbs, and crosswalks; pruned trees; new grass; weekly maintenance; and colorful floral landscaping donated by community members themselves. The park also contained a variety of public art as well, including murals, sculptures, and mosaics created by local artists. Utica community leaders describe the difference in Kopernik today and 10 years ago to be “like night and day.” And as happens in many Levitt communities, the increased use of the park has boosted the economy as well: Park visitation has increased foot traffic and sales at nearby businesses.

Levitt AMP Galva (7 years)

Wiley Park, a lush central green space in the small railroad town of Galva, Illinois, was once an underused community asset. Since presenting the Levitt AMP Music Series each summer starting in 2018, Wiley Park has become a dynamic hub bringing Galva and neighboring town residents together as it nurtures belonging, creativity, and community pride. Each summer the park has come to life for the free concert series—presented by Levitt nonprofit partner Galva Arts Council—that brings



award-winning talent to its charming Doss Memorial Stage. Before becoming the community's exclusive spot for jamming out to nationally and internationally acclaimed musical talent, Wiley Park was rather sleepy. Despite its central location and wide offering of amenities, including a disk golf course, two playgrounds, basketball hoops, and an ice-skating rink, the 2.5-acre public space had declining usage—reflective of the town's population decrease, spurred by a lack of jobs and closing businesses. Back then, the Doss Memorial Stage didn't even exist. But community changemakers never underestimated the green space's potential, particularly as a handful of nearby businesses had enjoyed increased foot traffic thanks to other community arts efforts spearheaded by Galva Arts Council, such as a coffee house music series, art classes, and yoga lessons. During the first season of the Levitt AMP Galva Music Series, the rural Illinois community fashioned a temporary stage. Witnessing in real time the chain of change that can come from fostering connection through the arts, Galva community leaders realized they could rejuvenate Wiley Park into becoming a flourishing community destination—the kind elder residents experienced decades ago and younger generations had yet to enjoy. The plan? To activate the park as the concert site of the Levitt AMP Galva Music Series. From the start, the free music series was a smash—so much so that community members immediately realized the impact that a proper stage would make on the park, surrounding businesses, and the town's small but dynamic creative economy. One of those residents was local business owner Jane Doss, who was so inspired by the vitality she saw unfold on the Levitt AMP Galva Music Series lawn that she donated \$100,000 to the construction of what was honorably named Doss and her parents. By the second season of the already impactful Levitt AMP Galva Music Series, audiences and performers alike enjoyed Wiley Park's newly constructed Doss Memorial Stage.



With the support of the city and other local donors, the beautiful brick-and-pine stage was ready for action. This year, Wiley Park continues to thrive as the stomping grounds of the Levitt AMP Galva Music Series, stirring increased local engagement, the opening of new businesses, and overall increased investment in the community's arts ecosystem—with Doss Memorial Stage acting as a centerpiece symbolizing the change that can unfold when the power of public space is realized.

With the support of the city and other local donors, the beautiful brick-and-pine stage was ready for action. This year, Wiley Park continues to thrive as the stomping grounds of the Levitt AMP Galva Music Series, stirring increased local engagement, the opening of new businesses, and overall increased investment in the community's arts ecosystem—with Doss Memorial Stage acting as a centerpiece symbolizing the change that can unfold when the power of public space is realized.

Levitt AMP Clinton (Year 3)

The photo shows the bandshell in McLain Rogers Park, prior to becoming home to the Levitt AMP Clinton Music Series.

For the most part, the park, which also includes a public pool, playground, and picnic areas, was regularly put to use. Yet, its historic bandshell, with seating for 3,000 (nearly a third of the town's population!), was rarely activated toward the latter half of the 20th century. Between a one-off

production of Oklahoma! In 1988 and high school graduation ceremonies annually held at the amphitheater, the stage rarely saw much action. So, with an initiative, Clinton civic leaders set out to change the fate of their town's beloved green space when they applied for a Levitt AMP Music Series grant.

Coming to life at the McLain Rogers Park bandshell, the Levitt AMP Clinton Music Series builds community through free, live music. The fruit of such efforts is the Levitt AMP



Clinton Music Series (presented by the nonprofit Scissortail Productions), which has nurtured the once-underused public space into a blossoming gathering space now regarded as a cultural hub for residents of Clinton and neighboring towns to relax with family, dance with friends, and get to know their neighbors—all while being introduced to styles of music they may not have otherwise had a chance to engage in. Additionally, today's holistic use of the park has kindled cultural tourism and economic revitalization: trends that not only contribute to the strengthening of Clinton's intimate social fabric but also demonstrate the collective impact that an outdoor public space can have when each of its facilities are activated to its full potential, no-holds-barred.

Levitt AMP Ocala (Year 8) (First Florida Grant city!)

Since 2017, the Levitt AMP Ocala Music Series in Florida has been a key part of the city's initiatives to improve citizens' lives through a cultural arts plan that fosters easy accessibility to the arts, breathing new life into the Martin Luther King Jr. Recreational Complex's Webb Field—a once underused space that is now a community and cultural hub. Levitt AMP Ocala has helped bring together the diverse community—which includes historically Black neighborhoods and a larger than average senior population—to engage in the performing arts. The series has also helped foster relationships with local organizations. The Levitt AMP Ocala Music Series established new community partners and strong connections with the Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Commemorative Commission of Marion County and the Juneteenth Celebration Commission, two groups and an entire neighborhood that previously felt without a voice.

The series has produced numerous catalytic improvements and investments as follows:

- Year 2 - Webb Field upgrades to electric, lighting, and sidewalks. Electrical updates to rain location at ED Croskey. Summer Breakspot Free Kids Meals partnership
- Year 3 - Infrastructure along W.Silver Springs Blvd and new crosswalks and beautification at it's intersection with MLK Blvd. Permanent Public Art Installation at entrance. Digital sign place at MLK Recreation area. Skate Park Panels painted onsite during concert series and installed at Ocala Skate Park as permanent art display.

- Year 4 - Interactive Musical Public Art Display installed at Webb Field. Education mural guide developed with Levitt Bridge Grant during COVID-19. Rain Location ED Croskey Practical Public Art Project - Quilting Sound Panels.
- Year 5 - New West Ocala Police, Fire, and Meeting space completed.
- Year 6 - Mary Sue Rich Community Center is built with interactive outdoor public art and active indoor art lab.
- Year 7 - SunTran full Levitt marketing campaign and bus wraps
- Year 8 - MLK Free Meal project. New series of Skate Park panels painted and installed at Ocala Skate Park

“The proof is in the pudding”

Ultimately, the Levitt AMP Music Series serves as a catalytic project that enhances quality of life, stimulates the local economy, and helps realize the CRA’s vision of a vibrant, inclusive, and thriving downtown district.

Programming Philosophy

The Levitt AMP Alachua Music Series will feature a genre-diverse, family-friendly lineup that reflects the community’s multicultural makeup and welcomes audiences of all ages. Programming will be informed by community input through partnership boards and include a mix of nationally touring acts and local performers. Planned genres include gospel, jazz, soul, hip-hop, country, bluegrass, Latin, funk, indie rock, and blues.

Through partnerships with local open-mic events, paid opportunities will be created for emerging regional talent, strengthening ties between artists and audiences. All performances will be curated with family suitability in mind, and the park’s playground and welcoming layout will enhance its appeal as a multi-generational venue.

Marketing and Publicity Strategy

To maximize visibility and ensure broad community engagement, the series will be promoted through a multi-layered strategy lead by the Alachua Business League:

- Traditional Media: Posters, flyers, and rack cards will be distributed across municipal buildings, businesses, and community centers. Partnerships with local radio stations and newspapers will extend reach.
- Digital Promotion: Social media campaigns will include artist previews, interviews, behind-the-scenes content, and paid advertising targeted across North Central Florida.
- Grassroots Outreach: A “Levitt Street Team” of youth ambassadors and volunteers will promote the series door-to-door, in schools, churches, and neighborhood events. Bilingual materials will increase accessibility.
- Partner Promotion: ABL, CRA, and Josh’s Place will activate their networks to drive awareness,

coordinate community tabling, and engage volunteers and vendors.

Community Engagement and Inclusion

Intentional outreach will ensure the series reflects the entire city. According to 2024 Census data, Alachua's population includes 24% Black or African American, 10% Hispanic/Latino, 2% Asian, and 8% multiracial residents. Outreach will involve:

- Partnerships with organizations like the Alachua African-American Historical Society and the Female Protective Society
- Engagement of underrepresented communities through local nonprofits, faith groups, and youth service organizations
- Focused efforts to involve those with disabilities, low-income families, and seniors
- On-site accessibility and multilingual promotion to create an inclusive atmosphere

Impact on Public Space and Economic Vitality

The series will bring consistent foot traffic to Skinner Field Park, increasing visibility for nearby businesses and reinforcing the importance of walkable, active public spaces and Main Street. It will demonstrate the potential of downtown Alachua as a cultural and economic hub, support the goals outlined in the city's CRA Redevelopment Plan, and inspire investment in future projects, including the revitalization of Theater Park.

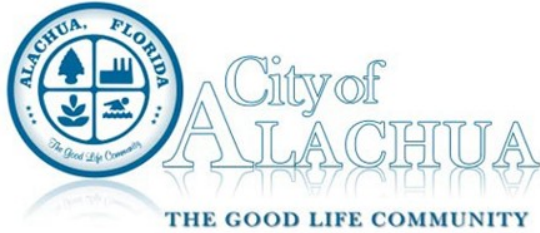
The series will also bridge neighboring communities like High Springs and Newberry, making Alachua a regional destination for arts and music.

Production

Production will be managed in partnership with the City of Alachua, utilizing the city's platform stage. A professional production company will be contracted for sound, lighting, and staging. In addition, a local open-mic provider will offer crew support and equipment, further embedding the series in the community's artistic ecosystem.

Conclusion

The Levitt AMP Alachua Music Series represents a transformative opportunity to unite residents through the power of music, activate underused public space, support local businesses, and foster inclusive cultural experiences. With trusted leadership from Josh's Place, the Alachua Business League, and the CRA, this series will embody Levitt's goals of equity, enrichment, and civic pride—creating a lasting legacy of community connection in the heart of historic Alachua.



Commission Agenda Item

MEETING DATE: June 23, 2025

SUBJECT: Gateway Sign on Main Street and US-441 - Project Overview

PREPARED BY: Susan King

RECOMMENDED ACTION:

Receive presentation and approve purchase of the parcel at the SE corner of Main Street and US-441 for the Gateway Sign

Summary

Gateway Sign - Project Overview

Staff initiated the current Gateway Sign Project in the Fall of 2023 after reviewing the 2019 City of Alachua's Wayfinding Masterplan prepared by CHW Professional Consultants.

The existing 10'4" x 9' freestanding monument sign was installed on the SE corner of Main Street and US-441 in front of CVS in 2009. The purpose of this sign was to offer a dedicated space to publicize City events, festivals and activities held in the historic downtown district. Complimentary space was also offered to benefit and support merchants on Main Street and serve as an "advertising venue."

Staff proposed using this same location for a new and more striking Gateway Sign since the parcel was situated at the threshold of our historic downtown and in a highly visible area. The proposal also included:

1. Moving the new Gateway Sign approximately 12 feet closer to US-441 for better visibility;
2. Incorporating the ornamental leaf pattern design over frosted acrylic panels with LED lighting illuminating the text and acrylic backing, concept art generated by CHW in the 2019 Wayfinding Masterplan; and
3. Installing an LED message board on the middle panel of the Gateway Sign to be used to broadcast essential information, publicize special events and promote Main Street businesses.

Staff requested quotes from three (3) full-service, highly-rated sign companies. ThemeWorks was selected to do the design development and engineering. Once the final design is approved by the CRA Board and land rights are secured, ThemeWorks will fabricate and install the Gateway Sign with an electronic message board.

The next step was securing land rights on the SE corner of Main Street and US-441. Mr. Alan Hitchcock offered to donate the small corner parcel that he still owned, but additional adjoining land was still needed. Last summer, Staff reached out and began negotiations with the owner of the “CVS Parcel,” proposing a donation of approximately 2,000 SF. The landowner requested a survey, an appraisal, and more information on the proposed Gateway Sign, its dimensions and its proposed location. CVS, the long-term tenant, had no objections, but requested that vegetation be removed on the parcel that was partially obscuring the existing CVS sign.

Several months ago, the landowner informed Staff that she could not donate the parcel. The landowner reported that she had already incurred \$44,000 in legal and CPA expenses associated with assessing the feasibility of transferring the land rights of this parcel to the City of Alachua. Initially, she offered the parcel for \$40,000. After continued negotiations, she agreed to lower the purchase price to \$30,000, her final offer. (The “AS IS” appraised value, as of June 21, 2024, was \$35,000.) Staff informed the landowner that the contract would be contingent upon approval by the Alachua City Commission.

At the May 19, 2025, CRA Advisory Board meeting, Member Bryan Boukari moved to forward a recommendation to the CRA board NOT to move forward with the purchase of the corner parcel for the Gateway Sign at the cost of \$30,000. The Motion passed by a 4-1 roll call vote.

During Citizens Comments, Mandi Bucci, business owner on Main Street, expressed that the “benefits of a beautiful Gateway Sign would far outweigh the minimal cost of the property.” Michele Lee, business owner on Main Street, agreed and added “the Gateway Sign would bring increased traffic, tax dollars and new business to downtown.”

Staff agrees with the downtown business owners. The Gateway Sign will:

- Establish an important landmark at the entrance of the historic district;
- Help revitalize and showcase Alachua’s beautiful, “postcard-worthy” downtown; and
- Contribute to restoring economic vitality and increasing foot traffic on Main Street.

The electronic message board will help promote:

- Special events and programs;
- Arts and cultural offerings;
- Much-needed frequent small-scale events and activities, which contribute to the vibrancy in any downtown area; and most importantly,
- Promote our downtown businesses.

There is no other feasible location for this Gateway Sign. Every possible option has been explored and considered. A substantial investment of staff time and resources has been made,

including two surveys, an appraisal, title work and a contract.

Staff requests that the CRA board consider moving forward with this purchase. This is important for our downtown and our downtown business community.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

ADDITIONAL FINANCIAL INFORMATION

ATTACHMENTS

None