



**November/2024**

To Our Valued City of Bartow Business Community:

Small businesses are vital to the city, state and national economy. In the US, there are 34.7 million small businesses, representing 99.7% of firms with paid employees nationwide. These ventures are responsible for 61.1% of new jobs created since 1995, and 45.9% of the employees in the private sector in our country.

In the City of Bartow, our small businesses are an important part of the fabric of our City. From the diverse retail, dining and service options on Main Street to the variety of merchants located throughout the City, Bartow boasts a robust business community that caters to the needs of our residents and boosts the local economy.

As Bartow City Manager, I take very seriously the attraction and support of small businesses. I am joined in this effort by a dedicated Community Redevelopment Agency, headed by Director Howard Smith.

The CRA is a vital organization focused on revitalizing and improving the quality of life within designated areas of the City of Bartow. Established in alignment with Florida's Community Redevelopment Act of 1969, the CRA works to eliminate blight, encourage economic growth, and foster sustainable development through strategic investments and partnerships.

The CRA serves as a catalyst for enhancing public infrastructure, supporting local businesses, and creating a thriving environment where residents and businesses can prosper. It operates within a designated boundary and leverages tax increment financing (TIF) to reinvest property tax revenues into redevelopment projects.

Howard and the CRA Board of Directors are constantly looking for ways to make our downtown area as appealing as possible for both new and existing businesses. In 2025 this will include the launch of a Neighborhood Clean-Up Program, streetscape and infrastructure enhancements, community events and redevelopment meetings.

Through strategic projects and meaningful partnerships, the CRA not only addresses immediate needs but also lays the foundation for a prosperous, vibrant, and sustainable community for generations to come.

At the November 18 City Commission meeting, Mayor Pfeiffer and our other elected officials recognized November 30 as Small Business Saturday, a concept created by American Express in 2010 and adopted by the Small Business Administration (SBA) the following year.

They, together with the Greater Bartow Chamber of Commerce and Main Street Bartow encourage all residents to kick off the holiday shopping season and support our local small businesses and our local economy by Shopping Small this Saturday, and year-round.

I want to wish each and every small business in our City a bright and prosperous holiday season. Whatever your product or service, thank you for choosing Bartow as a place to set up shop.

Sincerely,

**Mike Herr**

City Manager of Bartow

**C. Howard Smith**

Executive Director, Bartow CRA