



## **Palm Bay's Economic Development and Grant Programs Strong**

**Palm Bay, FL** - Over the past two fiscal years, the City of Palm Bay's economic growth has been strong, particularly in the commercial sector. According to the City's recently released Building Activity Report, Palm Bay has realized a 12% increase in total construction values, growing from \$155 million the previous year to \$210 million in the 2016/2017 fiscal year. This includes a 21% increase in permits issued to commercial projects, which represents a \$4.7 million increase in commercial activity throughout the City.

"This incredible increase in economic activity is welcomed, especially as the City has been under incredible scrutiny for the past year. We are excited to share the positive achievements made by our dedicated staff, despite sometimes imprecise and incomplete reporting," said Andy Anderson, the City of Palm Bay's Economic Development and External Affairs Director. Mr. Anderson continued, "We've been beaten up regarding our Federal and State housing programs, but we want our residents to know all the work that's been happening the past several months to ensure that our grant programs are in good standing."

The grant programs, under scrutiny following instances of poor bookkeeping by former staff, underwent a full internal review led by the City's new Community Development Administrator Nancy Jewell who boasts over 20 years of experience in the administration of community development grants. At a special Council Workshop on November 7th, Ms. Jewell presented Palm Bay's City Council with the findings of the audit. The presentation outlined how existing issues were appraised and attended to, and described corrective measures the City has taken to reestablish the programs.

The review determined that there is no missing or misappropriated money. Diligent examination of all records showed disorganized management at

times, but ultimately all grant funds were able to be accounted for down to the dollar. The City of Palm Bay has determined that all community development grant programs are currently in good standing based on the regulations set forth by each program's governing body.

The City has worked in tandem with State and Federal officials throughout the review process and, following the submission of the findings, the City has been found to be in full compliance with HUD Community Development Block Grant regulations, as well as the HOME Investments Partnerships Program.

Based on the recommendation of SHIP officials, The City of Palm Bay performed a full reconciliation of the audited 2013/2014 fiscal year. Furthermore, Palm Bay exceeded audit requirements by addressing files from 2009 onward to ensure Palm Bay is in good standing with the program. The efforts made during the internal review led to a reconfiguration of data management procedures at the City that is expected to improve program efficiency and reporting in the future. Because of these efforts, the City of Palm Bay will be fully compliant with SHIP Program regulations and the City expects the complete return of unencumbered funds, as well as a return to regular disbursement of current SHIP allocations. Upon confirmation of compliance, Palm Bay anticipates an additional \$2.3 million dollars in SHIP funding.

The full presentation from the special Council Workshop of housing and community development grant programs has been posted to the City's Growth Management homepage.