

## **Lakeland Downtown Development Authority Receives Tourism Grant from VISIT FLORIDA**

VISIT FLORIDA, the state's official source for travel planning, has awarded a Cultural Heritage and Nature Tourism, Marketing Grant to the Lakeland Downtown Development Authority which begins July 1, 2007.

The announcement of the grant, in the amount of \$5,000, came during the Commission's June 14<sup>th</sup> meeting in Coral Gables.

"The purpose of these grants is to help non-profit entities and local governments stretch their tourism marketing dollars in an effort to expand cultural heritage and nature tourism activities in Florida," said Kerri Post, Vice President of New Product Development for VISIT FLORIDA.

"We were pleased that VISIT FLORIDA and the Florida Commission on Tourism selected us from among a large number of grant applicants, during their most competitive grant cycle to date," said Anne Furr, Executive Director. "These funds will be used for marketing Downtown in partnership with the Polk Museum of Art, Explorations V Children's Museum, and Florida Southern College's Frank Lloyd Wright Child of the Sun Center. "These funds will help us better position and market Downtown Lakeland as a desirable destination."

VISIT FLORIDA, a private/public partnership, is the Florida Commission on Tourism's day-to-day operating corporation.

The Lakeland Downtown Development Authority (LDDA) is a special district in Downtown Lakeland that also serves as the Advisory Board to the Lakeland Community Redevelopment Agency (CRA). Some examples of Downtown tax dollars at work are the historic streetlights and wide sidewalks with streetscape pavers and tree wells and container gardens placed on the streetscape to add color. The LDDA/CRA partnered with the city and private individuals to fund improvements at Lake Mirror. The LDDA is a partner with the Lake Mirror Classic Auto Festival held in October and the Lemon Street Celebration, held each spring to celebrate the Florida Outdoor Sculpture Competition. In addition, the LDDA has hired marketing and planning consultants, sign design consultants and others to provide direct benefit to Downtown businesses. As the Advisory Board, it is guiding the rebirth of a 15-acre neighborhood north of the Lakeland Police Department with 449 condos and townhomes. The LDDA contributes toward the Downtown's marketing programs and other initiatives as well.