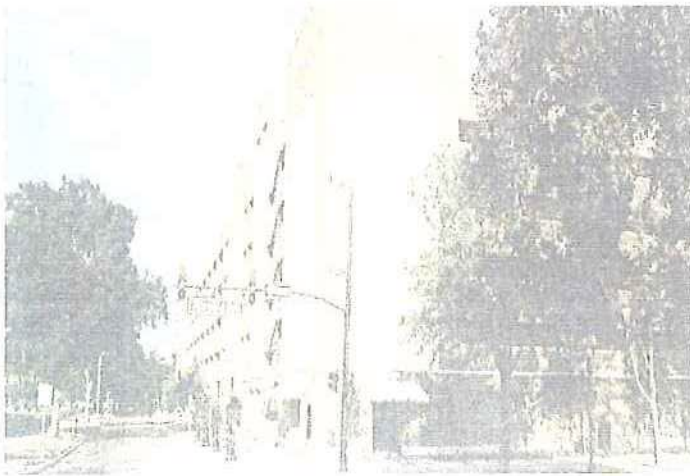


Parking Garage Feasibility Study For Polk County Government Center

Bartow, Florida



Prepared For:

The City of Bartow

**The Bartow Community
Redevelopment Agency**

**The Polk County Board
of County Commissioners**

PBSJ &



Parking Garage Feasibility Study

November 2004

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Prepared By

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Parking Garage Feasibility Study

Executive Summary

This study was conducted as a collaborative effort on the part of the City of Bartow, the Bartow Community Redevelopment Agency (CRA), and Polk County. The Study's purpose is to address parking problems that exist in the City of Bartow in the area surrounding the Polk County Government Center. This investigation of the feasibility of a parking garage for the Polk County Government Center follows a series of studies that identified a shortage of parking in the area and spillover effects on the available parking in the adjacent areas of downtown Bartow.

During the recent Community Image, Signage, and Linkage Study commissioned by the Bartow CRA, the City and the County held a series of meetings with the Consultants to determine if a common solution to parking and signage could be found. During the Study, the consultants researched the existing public and private parking areas, wayfinding and other signage systems, and made a number of short and long term recommendations to improve the parking situation. One key recommendation was to conduct a parking garage feasibility study to determine if a garage was an economically viable option to increase available parking. The team of PBS&J and Rich and Associates, parking specialists, was commissioned to conduct the study.

The Consultant team prepared this analysis of parking in and around the Polk County Government Center area. The analysis determined the number of spaces that would be required in a new parking structure to make it economically viable, the fees that would have to be charged, and the size of the site required to accommodate an efficient and economical parking deck structure. The results of the analysis also included the development of a conceptual footprint of the parking structure, an estimate of construction costs and projected revenues (based on the parking demand from the turnover and occupancy study) as well as projected operating expenses.

Existing Parking and Usage

Four surface lots are located close to the Polk County Government Center buildings. A surface lot designated primarily for jurors is located directly west of the Courthouse and has 154 spaces. North of the Courthouse, and wrapping around the County Administration Building, is the Green Lot with 378 spaces. North of Boulevard is the largest lot with 503 spaces known as the Red Lot. The fourth County parking lot, located to the west of Mill Ave, the Yellow Lot contains 395 spaces. These four lots equal a total of 1430 surface parking spaces.

A turnover and occupancy count was conducted on Monday, July 12th and Tuesday, July 13th of all County lots and on-street parking spaces located within a one-block radius of the County buildings. The results of the turnover and occupancy field research showed Tuesday the 13th as the peak day with peak occupancy of 106% from 9:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m. Due to the lack of parking spaces there were approximately 95 vehicles parked in unmarked spaces on Tuesday. In comparison, peak occupancy on Monday was slightly lower at 104% occupancy between 9:00 a.m. and 11:00 a.m., which resulted in 80 vehicles being parked in unmarked spaces throughout the day.

On street parking is predominantly committed to 2-hour parking or less and is very limited within the study area. On Monday, on street parking peaked at 55%. The Tuesday on-street parking count reached a peak of 53% occupancy. Many vehicles were parked longer than the posted time limit on

both Monday and Tuesday. In fact, 38% of observed vehicles parked 6 hours or longer on Monday. Similarly, 37% of on-street vehicles were observed to be parked 6 hours or longer on Tuesday. These findings suggest that employees of the Polk County Government Center area and daylong visitors are using short-term on-street parking spaces for long-term use.

Based on information provided to the consultants by the County, it is important to note that usage during the week of July 12th was abnormal for several reasons. First, July is off-season and this would have an effect on the number of tourist and snowbird visits to the County and the courts. Second, a higher than normal number of staff was on vacation and finally a number of judges were attending a conference during the two-day period the turnover and occupancy count took place. Therefore it is believed the observed occupancies were at least 15% and possibly 25% lower than would be expected during a baseline period during the peak season.

While the majority of parking spaces located within the study area are unreserved public parking, a few parking areas are restricted. County Judges have reserved parking in a small structure located on South Floral Avenue, which provides direct access to the Courthouse. Jury members are directed to park in the surface lot located directly west of the Courthouse, known as the Blue Lot.

An analysis of the number of employees and visitors to each office provided the current demand for parking spaces for the Polk County Government Center area. Table 2 shows the number of current parking spaces needed based on the activities of the County Government Center during the Monday through Friday workweek.

Conclusion

Based upon the established parking demand around the Polk County Government Center, and its effects on the adjacent downtown on-street parking spaces, a parking structure is a viable option to resolve the parking shortfall. The most appropriate location for this structure would be just north of the Polk County Courthouse, between the County Administration Building and the Sheriff's Office, south of Boulevard Street and north of Church Street. Short-term needs would allow a structure of 4 or more stories to be constructed. Adjacent parking modules could be added as long-term needs dictate. The range of parking spaces produced by the scenario outlined is a minimum of 560 spaces and a maximum of 1015 spaces.

Projected costs associated with construction, operation and maintenance of the parking structure indicate two things will be necessary. First, it is assumed that a bond or other loan instrument would be necessary to construct the structure. Second, it is assumed that either an additional source of revenue, such as a grant, would be required to reduce the annual costs of paying back the bondholders, or an annual subsidy would be required, at least in the early years. Under any potential scenario, management of the parking system for downtown Bartow and the County Government Center must be coordinated and include operation of the proposed parking structure. Other parking improvements and policies will need to be implemented to ensure the financial success of the parking structure.

PARKING GARAGE FEASIBILITY STUDY

I. Parking Supply Analysis

County Government Center Parking Lots

A listing of all parking lots owned or under the control of Polk County, serving government employees and visitors within the study area was compiled and verified.

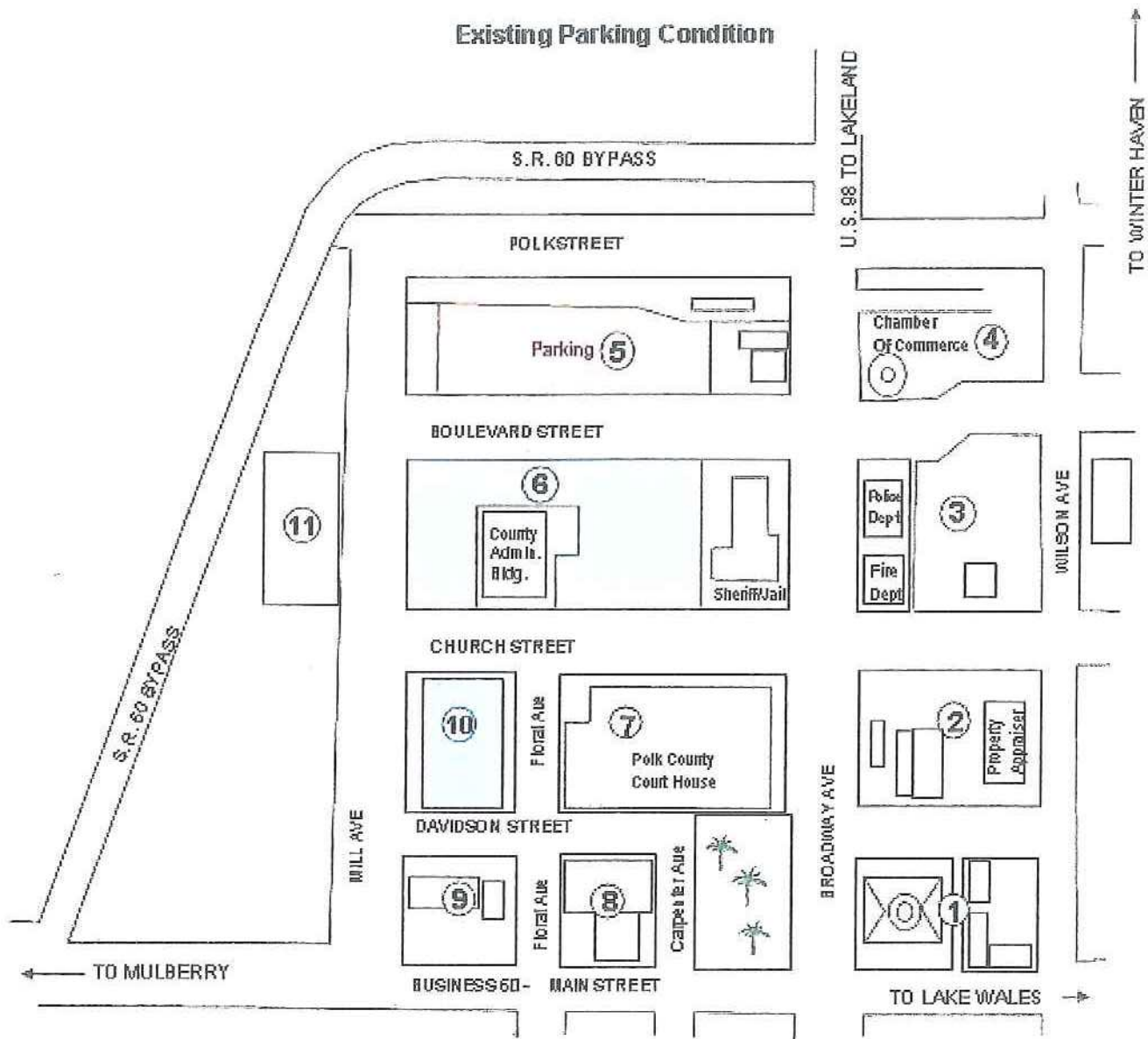
The study team surveyed all of the parking spaces located within the study area, the only exception was the small parking structure designated for judges that contains 50 parking spaces. This structure provides direct access to the courthouse and is restricted for security reasons. In the Polk County Government Center Area, the study team surveyed the 1430 off-street spaces that are controlled by the County and include public, employee, reserved, and barrier free or handicapped parking. Also included in this count are spaces specifically reserved for the Sheriff's Office, County Commissioners, and other staff. The following Table 1 shows the off-street parking lots identified as County lots followed by Figure I, a map of the Polk County Government Center area.

Table 1
Off-Street Surface Parking Areas

Lot West of Courthouse: (Blue Lot)	regular	148 spaces
	handicap	6 spaces
	Total	154 spaces
Lot North of Courthouse: (Green Lot)	regular	330 spaces
	handicap	34 spaces
	reserved	14 spaces
	Total	378 spaces
Mill Avenue Lot: (Yellow Lot)	regular	395 spaces
	Total	395 spaces
Boulevard Street Lot: (Red Lot)	regular	463 spaces
	proposed	40 spaces
	Total	503 spaces
GRAND TOTAL		1430 SPACES

Figure I
Polk County Government Center Area
Bartow, Florida

Existing Parking Condition



Existing	
Blue Lot:	147 spaces 6 handicap 1 motorcycle
Green Lot:	330 spaces 34 handicap 14 reserved
Red Lot:	461 spaces 12 motorcycle 40 proposed area 24,25
Yellow Lot:	395 spaces
Total	1430 parking spaces

