



**PARKING TASK FORCE
FINAL REPORT**

September 2023



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I. Introduction



City of New Smyrna Beach

Parking Task Force

The City of New Smyrna Beach Parking Task Force (PTF) was established by Resolution 03-23, adopted by the City Commission on January 24, 2023. Applicants were appointed by the City Commission and the PTF then met twice per month between April and September 2023. The topics discussed were typically selected by City staff per staff's meeting schedule.

At the outset of the 2023 PTF Report it would be helpful to understand the foundational thoughts that shaped the recommendations:

1. From Occasional to Consistent Attention

Parking is the first and last impression of visitors, and a positive visitor experience is critically important to our City's economic sustainability.

There have been occasional parking studies conducted by the City over the past 12 years. An important step forward was taken with the City Commission's decision nearly ten years ago to start charging for certain beachside parking lots (using kiosks) that were previously free, and to create the Parking Fund and the Parking Enforcement Team within the Police Department.

Current data indicates that there is a regulatory shortage of 450 spaces on Canal Street and 250 spaces on Flagler Avenue.

There was public support during the Flagler Parking Workshop held on March 10, 2020.



2. Parking Focus needs to include Mobility

If drivers have trouble finding a parking space, the time spent looking for parking or waiting to park while the beach ramps are closed for high tide has a negative impact on traffic volume and movement. To ensure maximum efficiency, City efforts to provide parking must include mobility.

3. Eliminate Recommendations that Generate Known Objections

The 2023 Parking Task Force has reviewed previous parking studies and found that many of the recommendations included in those previous studies were not implemented. Members of the PTF have expressed a belief that the vigorous objections of stakeholders to some recommendations made the entire report suspect and difficult to implement. Parking Task Force members expressed their belief that this non-implementation of many previous recommendations may have been caused by the following:

- Resident objections:
 - Right of Way (ROW) parking: There are some unpaved areas next to the pavement on side streets one-half block from Flagler that have been used for parking for years. This report does not recommend creating any new ROW parking.
 - Street design: This report does not recommend any changes in street design.
 - Discounted parking for New Smyrna Beach residents

- Business and Commercial Property Owner concerns:
 - New taxes or assessments: This report does not recommend any new taxes or assessments to property owners (such actions could have the unanticipated consequence of raising rents and forcing out existing small businesses). This report recommends the expansion of paid parking to enhance the sole revenue source for the provision of parking.



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- Provide accommodations for employees working within the parking districts
- Previous Recommendations deemed to be too costly:
 - Low cost, quick start-up: Start inexpensively with leases or revenue sharing on currently existing privately owned parking lots, using cell phone payments through private vendors. Cell phone payments for public parking are used in many Florida cities.
 - Make data-driven decisions on expensive facilities: Avoid large expenditures until data is collected and demand is proven.
- 4. To effectively and efficiently implement a parking program, the City will need an experienced, reputable advisor, and education for City officials on parking and mobility best practices.

Parking in the 21st century is a distinct discipline involving many complex topics – including computerized systems for collecting parking payments and collecting and analyzing data; traffic and mobility planning; real-time information dissemination to drivers; property agreements; and facility construction. City Commission members need advice from an experienced professional at the outset, and on a continuing basis... as well as education on best practices.

5. Parking Data is a Must Have

The provision of public parking is different than the City's General Fund operations: it is an operation where customers pay a fee for a specific service they receive. This service provision requires careful planning – especially when large expenditures of public funds are at stake. The ongoing collection of data and its analysis regarding parking usage and demand is an absolute requirement.



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6. The City's Parking Function Must Embrace Technology

To obtain the parking data necessary for planning and operating public parking facilities, technology is needed. There are many Florida cities using vendors to provide parking payment services using customer cell phones – with a relatively low up-front cost. These vendors can provide parking usage reports, and more advanced equipment can provide additional data.

Drivers also need information through a parking information app regarding the location of parking lots and alternative activities during beach closures.

7. There is NO free parking!

The City is expending its funds to develop and maintain parking lots, and to enforce regulations in those areas. It is important to keep in mind that public parking is NOT free!

8. Understand any special conditions in an area that make it difficult to adequately provide public parking

a. There are special conditions present in the Flagler Ave area that affect parking, including:

- i. Beach accessibility and the impact of ramp closures at high tide, or when beach parking is at full capacity
- ii. The close presence of homes near the Flagler Ave commercial area and the need to minimize negative impacts to the residents
- iii. There are many Flagler Ave area business employees who need parking: the number of employees at any one-time during business hours has been estimated at 100 or more.
- iv. Arterial roads bringing visitors and beach goers to the Flagler Ave area are controlled by other agencies.



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v. There are only a small number of properties in the Flagler Ave area where public parking could cost-effectively be located.

b. On-street Flagler Avenue parking should serve local businesses and not Beach goers. Two Flagler area storeowners have noted that beach goers are parking on-street for the currently allowed period of four hours for free while at the beach, taking spaces that Flagler store customers need.

9. The Decision-Making Process Needs to Involve Stakeholders

Residents, business owners, and property owners will be affected by City policies regarding parking and mobility, and their input needs to be sought out and welcomed.

10. Recognize the opportunities for Productive Partnerships

Improvements will be more effective using a collaborative effort with agencies, such as Volusia County, FDOT and New Smyrna Beach Visitors Bureau, that are already involved in one or more aspects of parking and mobility operations.

11. Utilize the Private Sector resources as much as possible

The private sector can help solve the City's parking problems by developing privately owned, paid parking lots. The City needs to develop and adopt a procedure for facilitating those efforts.



II. Assessing the Problem



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Parking literature notes that data is needed to assess demand and make decisions on planning parking facilities (see 8 Ways to Launch Your Parking Strategy article in the exhibits). There has been only one parking study conducted in the beachside area in recent years as reported in the July 19, 2019, Flagler Avenue Parking Study Phase I. Unfortunately, the study was limited - conducted for a two-day (Friday and Saturday) period in May of that year, when there were no special events held and there was no recording of the timing of high tides and their effect on parking. The report concludes: "Staff posits that during an average weekend throughout the year, parking capacity is sufficient, but during holidays and special events, there is a parking deficit."

Parking literature also notes that technology needs to be utilized. In the February 2020 report on Flagler Ave Parking Strategies, the recommendations are very similar to those approved by the PTF – with the same phasing. For example, the first recommendation is to implement a payment system for all on-street and public parking spaces on Flagler Ave, Canal Street, and other on-street parking spaces in the immediate vicinity of these areas.

At this point, the City has neither a data collection method nor the technology in place to collect the data... but there is strong anecdotal evidence of the need for increasing the parking supply on beachside, and some evidence of the increasing need in the Canal Street area.

Understanding the importance of having parking data, and the City's current situation of having no reliable data, is key to understanding the recommendations of the Parking Task Force.



III. Recommendation



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The PTF members approved by consensus the following recommendations to be included in the final report:

Phase I

- Hire a temporary advisor/consultant for the following purposes: evaluate and provide recommendations for the Parking and Mobility Advisory Authority and Parking and Mobility Department
- Create a centralized Parking and Mobility Department
- Create a Parking and Mobility Advisory Authority
- Encourage and seek partnerships with privately owned businesses (Chamber of Commerce, local merchants, etc.) and public agencies such as, FDOT, Volusia County, the New Smyrna Beach Visitors Bureau, as well as existing organizations that have existing parking lots within the parking districts
- Establish communication with Volusia County regarding beach access / parking issues
- Reduce the time limit for on-street parking on Flagler Ave to 2 hours until paid parking is established

Phase II

- Expansion of paid parking to all City-controlled parking areas (lots, right-of-way), within the confines of Canal Street and Flagler Avenue Parking Districts, with special provisions for employees and City residents
- Expansion of payment technology, that would include data collection capabilities. Recommend implementation scaled payment schedule dependent on zone and specific location of lots
- Create a leasing structure for the purpose of leasing properties for shared parking
- Establish a free shuttle service to be operated by direct ownership of the City or through contractual agreement
- Evaluate all parking signage, including those at loading zones on Flagler Avenue



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- The preferred method of providing new spaces is through expansion of parking capacity through surface and shared lots
 - ⊖ Location to be provided by advisor/consultant for properties located on maps
 - ⊖ Construction type for new construction of parking lots, beachside: unpaved

- The Towne Center in Venetian Bay has recently lost a 36-parking space lot and several acres of vacant land parking serving business customers; and discussions have been held regarding the potential elimination of business customer parking in the lot adjacent to the community pool. City staff needs to address the business owners' concerns for parking by working with the business owners and the developer to prepare a study of parking options to serve the business customers in the Towne Center. Options to be studied include the elimination of the green space and the shrinking of the sidewalk on the East side of the Towne Center along Luna Bella Street and the provision of angle parking from the clock tower roundabout to the north to the southern edge of the parking lot adjacent to the community pool.

Phase III

- Defer parking garages on Flagler Avenue and Canal Street to such time in future as needed



IV. Fiscal Considerations



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City staff to prepare a budget for the recommendations above to amend the existing Parking Fund Budget, with revenues solely generated from parking activities

- The cost of a temporary advisor/consultant. One PTF member estimate: \$20,000.
- The cost to fill the new position as the Director of the Parking and Mobility Department
- The cost of the cell phone payment system. One vendor's verbal estimate: \$5,000 up front, and \$250 per month to be paid by drivers as a parking app user fee
- The cost of signage at the Brannon Center to open the Center parking lot for public parking on days when there are no events scheduled in the Center
- The cost of contracts to be negotiated by City staff:
 - A contract could be negotiated with the Coronado Community United Methodist Church for leasing additional property for public or employee parking (Full disclosure: Current PTF member is a member of this church.)
 - A contract with a transportation vendor for a shuttle system from shared parking lots for days and times to be determined. At the outset the service may only be needed initially for holidays with heavy beach use (for example, Memorial Day, July 4th, and Labor Day) and for special events (for example, Images and the Jazz fest). The transportation shuttle should be free to customers and transport them to the beach, or Flagler Ave, or Canal St as needed.
 - Contracts with businesses on the North Causeway for the use of their parking lots at times when the businesses are closed.



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- The parking lot located on Quay Assisi near the Marine Discovery Center is the largest parking lot in the North Causeway area. It is suggested here that the cost to customers wanting to park in this lot would be an annual membership to the Marine Discovery Center, which would allow customers to park for one year without further charge
- The vacant lot owned by Silvestri Company in the Southeast area of the North Causeway could be leased and developed for public parking

Public Workshop

It is recommended that the City Commission hold a workshop to discuss these recommendations. The purpose of the workshop would be to gather stakeholder feedback. Invitations to the workshop will be widely and heavily distributed to stakeholders – including residents in the Flagler Avenue and Canal St. areas, business owners, and property owners.



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V. Conclusion



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The intent of these recommendations is to:

- Provide a relatively quick and low-cost method for additional parking within the shortest possible timeframe
- Provide for the collection of data to document demand for future parking and mobility initiatives
- Provide for a consistent focus with in-house expertise for the provision of public parking

Parking Task Force Members

Chair Gerard Pendergast

Vice Chair Zoe Neuner

Member O.E. Burke

Member Elizabeth Jones

Member Wayne Lundberg

Member Tony Otte

Member Serge Sorese



VI. Exhibits

- 8 ways to launch your parking strategy article
- Flagler Avenue Parking Study Phase I
- Flagler Avenue Parking Strategies
- Land Development Regulations - Parking
- Map – Canal Street
- Map – Flagler Avenue
- Map – North Causeway
- Map – Venetian Bay
- Resolution No. 02-14 Establishing Permit Parking Fees at Oceanfront City Facilities
- Resolution No. 09-15 Establishing permit Parking Fees at Oceanfront City Facilities and Exempting City Residents
- Resolution No. 15-15 Permit Parking at Oceanfront City Facilities and Exempting County Residents
- Resolution No. 03-23 Reestablishing Parking Task Force