

TRANSPORTATION AND MOBILITY

Introduction and Purpose

The primary purpose of the Transportation and Mobility Element of the Wauchula CRA Master Plan Update is to provide an overview of the existing conditions and proposed plans for the various transportation modes within the City of Wauchula and the Community Redevelopment Area (CRA). This section is also intended to provide guidance and recommendations to the City and CRA for the development of a transportation system that contributes to the success of the City and the CRA through overall enhancements within the CRA that can lead to increased economic activity, support the CRA's vision and enhance sustainable transportation practices. The Plan update seeks to reinforce the goals of improved traffic flow, expanded availability of parking in the downtown, increased multimodal services and travel ways for pedestrian and bicyclists, reduced heavy vehicle impacts, and increased traffic safety throughout the community.

Guiding Principles

The guiding principles in developing the plan include the following:

1. Identify and approve funding for transportation systems (automobiles, pedestrians, bicycles) to facilitate connectivity throughout the CRA by serving all of the neighborhoods and providing connection access to all parks, schools and activities.
2. Identify additional parking opportunities in the downtown that are not only safe and convenient, but easily located and accessible.
3. Create a safe efficient traffic circulation system that provides sufficient access by all modes of transportation between activity centers within the redevelopment area and the services of the community.
4. Work closely with Hardee County and the Florida Department of Transportation to address traffic circulation opportunities and constraints, and the physical appearance of the primary transportation corridors within the redevelopment district.
5. Create a safe, secure, appealing and efficient pedestrian system.
6. Construct sidewalks and bicycle pathways throughout the CRA appropriately designed and separated from vehicular circulation, where feasible, for safe and efficient routes which can be used as positive tools to enhance the areas and the surrounding environment through the use of landscaping and other visual treatments.
7. Pursue development of recreational amenities surrounding the downtown core, including trails and bikeways to encourage pedestrian access to the downtown.

While few non-automobile-based transportation options exist in and around Wauchula at this time, this situation can change through proactive planning and implementation. Attention to pedestrian and bicycle travel with enhanced sidewalks, trails, and expanded greenways can create a network for local travel and recreation throughout the community and the downtown core. This can help aid the growth of the CRA and strengthen the historic environment of Wauchula.

A transportation and mobility plan that includes a transportation needs assessment which evaluates existing and future road conditions and recommends improvements to address existing and future road deficiencies identified as a result of new growth. The plan should recognize that building more roads is one way of addressing deficiencies, and that in some areas; this approach is the best option. However, the plan should also focus on alternative transportation strategies that include pedestrian and bicycle connections, access management, and intersection operational improvements. The plan would suggest that these strategies, when and where feasible, should be incorporated (i.e., planned for, programmed, etc.) before the construction of new roads.

Existing Conditions

The City of Wauchula Traffic Circulation Element of the Comprehensive Plan establishes level of service standards for roadways identified by the following classifications: Principal Arterials, Minor Arterials, County Collector Roads, and Local Roads (See Table 1). Existing conditions for the peak hour (i.e., the one-hour period wither a.m. or p.m. with the greatest vehicle trip counts) on the roadway network are analyzed in Table 2 finding that each facility operates within its adopted level of service standard, as well as within standards required by FDOT for State highways.

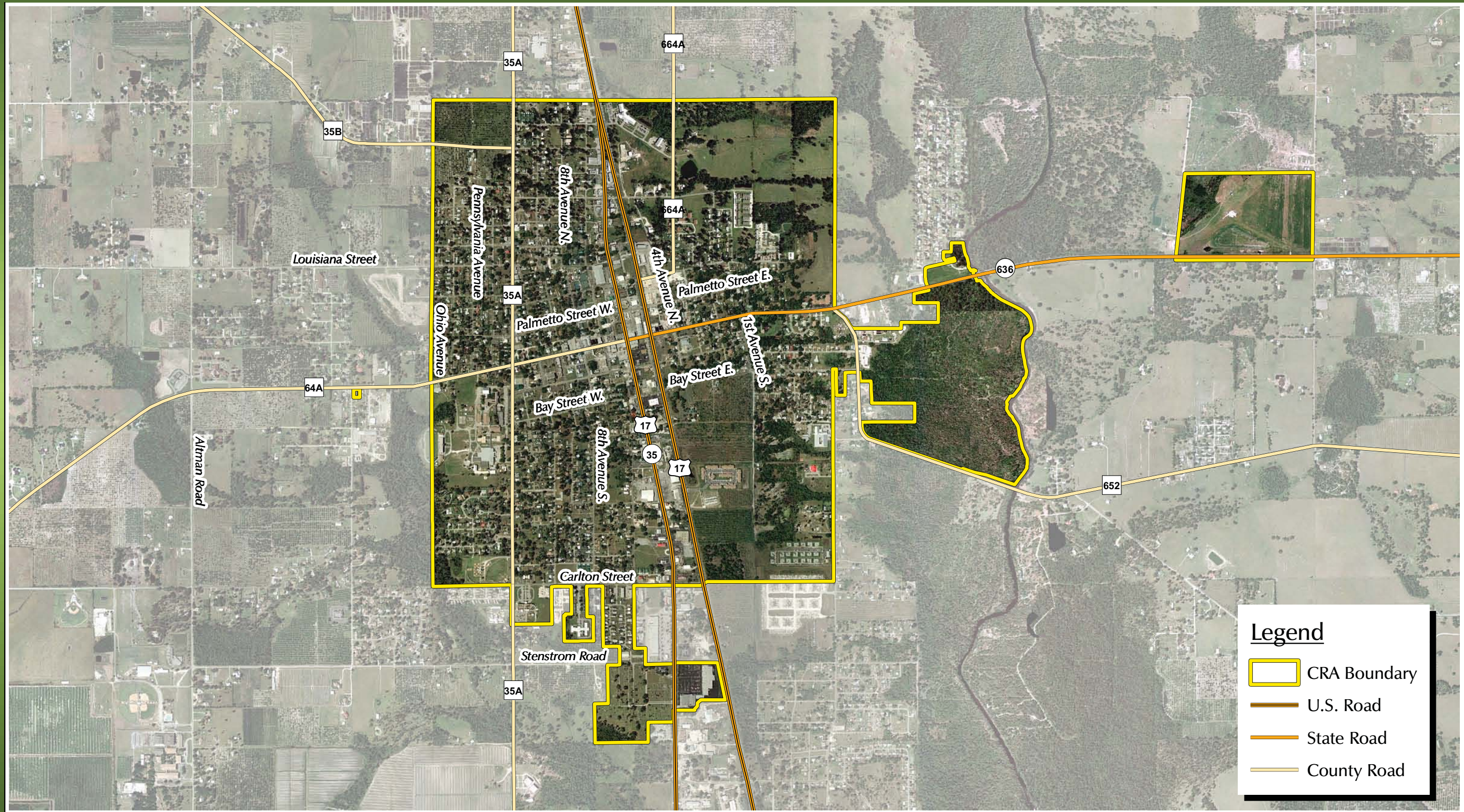
Roads	Standards
Principal arterials	LOS C
Minor arterials	LOS D
Collector roads	LOS D
Local roads	LOS D

In February 2008, the City added landscaping and brick pavers to U.S. 17 northbound and southbound lanes (Oak Street to Bay Street) and Main Street (4th Avenue to 8th Avenue). On-street parking spaces on a portion Main Street were outlined within landscaped bulb-outs. All improvements were completed with enhancement funds from the FDOT through the Local Agency Program (LAP). The City was awarded a total of \$1,405,000 from FDOT and \$206,557 was utilized from the CRA to complete infrastructure projects.



Road Segment	From	To	Functional Classification (Comp Plan)	City Adopted LOS Standard	FDOT LOS Standard	Peak Hour LOS 2009	2009 Peak Hour Two Directional Volume	2009 Peak Hour Two Directional Capacity
U.S. 17 (NB)	South City Limits	Main Street (SR 636)	Principal Arterial	C	C	B	950	2,840
U.S. 17 (NB)	Main Street (SR 636)	Bell Street	Principal Arterial	C	C	B	1,062	2,840
U.S. 17 (SB)	Bell Street	Main Street (SR 636)	Principal Arterial	C	C	C	950	2,190
U.S. 17 (SB)	Main Street (SR 636)	South city Limits	Principal Arterial	C	C	B	1,062	2,840
U.S. 17	Bell Street	North City Limits	Principal Arterial	C	C	A	1,264	4,190
SR 636	U.S. 17	Peace River	Minor Arterial	D	C	C	637	1,010
SR 636	Peace River	East City Limits	Minor Arterial	D	C	B	637	1,-180
Oak Street	U.S. 17	Heard Bridge Road	County Collectors	D	N/A	No LOS data or analysis available on County Collectors or Wauchula's local roads; traffic counts are not taken on these roadways on a continual basis.		
Florida Avenue (CR 35A)	North City Limits	South City Limits						
West Main Street (CR 64A)	U.S. 17	West City Limits						
Polk Road (CR 35B)	CR 35A	West City Limits						

(a) Level of service (LOS) – A quantitative measurement of the quality of service of the roadway facilities into six letter grade levels with “A” describing the most free-flowing traffic conditions and with “F” describing the most congested traffic conditions. Time delay and very slow speeds are predictors of failing LOS on a particular roadway.
NOTE: U.S. 17 through Wauchula is designated by FDOT as a Strategic Intermodal System (SIS) facility; level of service standard set by State and to be included in Wauchula LOS policies.



City of Wauchula Community Redevelopment Agency

CRA Existing Transportation Route Map

City of Wauchula, Florida

CONTACT: MARTY BLACK, AICP, ICMA-CM (941) 379-7600
AERIAL FLIGHT DATE: 2008

SCALE: IN FEET
0 375 750 1,500 Feet
DATE: MAY, 2010
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The City identified a street paving project through the Capital Improvements Plan (CIP) for the 2009-2010 fiscal year and allocated \$250,000 of CRA funds to complete this project. Based on discussions with City Staff, a prioritized street listing

has been preliminarily identified but not formally adopted at this time. The FDOT District 1 Five-Year



Transportation Improvement Plan for Hardee County has no highway improvements planned in Wauchula, but does provide for miscellaneous sidewalk improvements, and highway resurfacing.

Pedestrians, Bicycles, & Non-Motorized Facilities

Downtown Wauchula has a generally well-defined grid street pattern; however, not every street accommodates pedestrians and bicyclists. In truth, only Main Street, Florida Avenue and Orange Avenue provide a clearly defined pedestrian realm, all other streets are heavily weighted towards the automobile. Sidewalks are generally located along arterial and collector roads, while local roads generally do not have sidewalks or similar facilities.



Each street should provide greater balance and improved orientation towards the needs of the pedestrian in an effort to create an environment that encourages walking, biking and pedestrian activities. Like most downtown settings, sidewalks are present in

downtown Wauchula. Not every street, however appropriately accommodates pedestrians and bicyclists. In actuality, very few streets provide a clearly defined pedestrian realm. All other streets are heavily weighted towards the automobile. Opportunities exist to provide connectivity between the downtown and key destinations including the Oak Street Park, Peace River Park, City Skate Park, Florida Hospital, YMCA and the Wauchula Elementary School.

Primarily, two fundamental elements contribute to a vibrant pedestrian environment—the destination and the journey. Destination-wise, Wauchula is seeking to restore and recreate civic and entertainment areas downtown. Gaps in the transportation network, though, make accessibility to or between these sites limited, potentially unsafe or unattractive to pedestrians. This is unfortunate because several established neighborhoods are adjacent to downtown. Regrettably, the majority of these places lack adequate connections or facilities to link these areas to the urban core. For bicyclists, the current circumstances are even less prevalent. Unlike sidewalks, marked bike lanes are not currently present in the CRA. This reality forces bicyclists to ride on the street without a designated travel lane, a situation that can be confusing to both drivers and cyclists.



A sidewalk inventory was performed identifying the location and generalized condition of the sidewalks, either passable or impassible, within the CRA. The following maps



identify the location and condition of the sidewalk facilities within the CRA and the subareas. Generally the sidewalks are more prevalent within the Downtown Core as compared to the other sub-districts, albeit still somewhat limited when on roadways other than the major thoroughfares (Main Street, Florida Avenue). Excluding the East District (i.e., Peace River and Crews Park), the South District has the least amount of sidewalks and similar infrastructure.

Proposed Parking Improvements

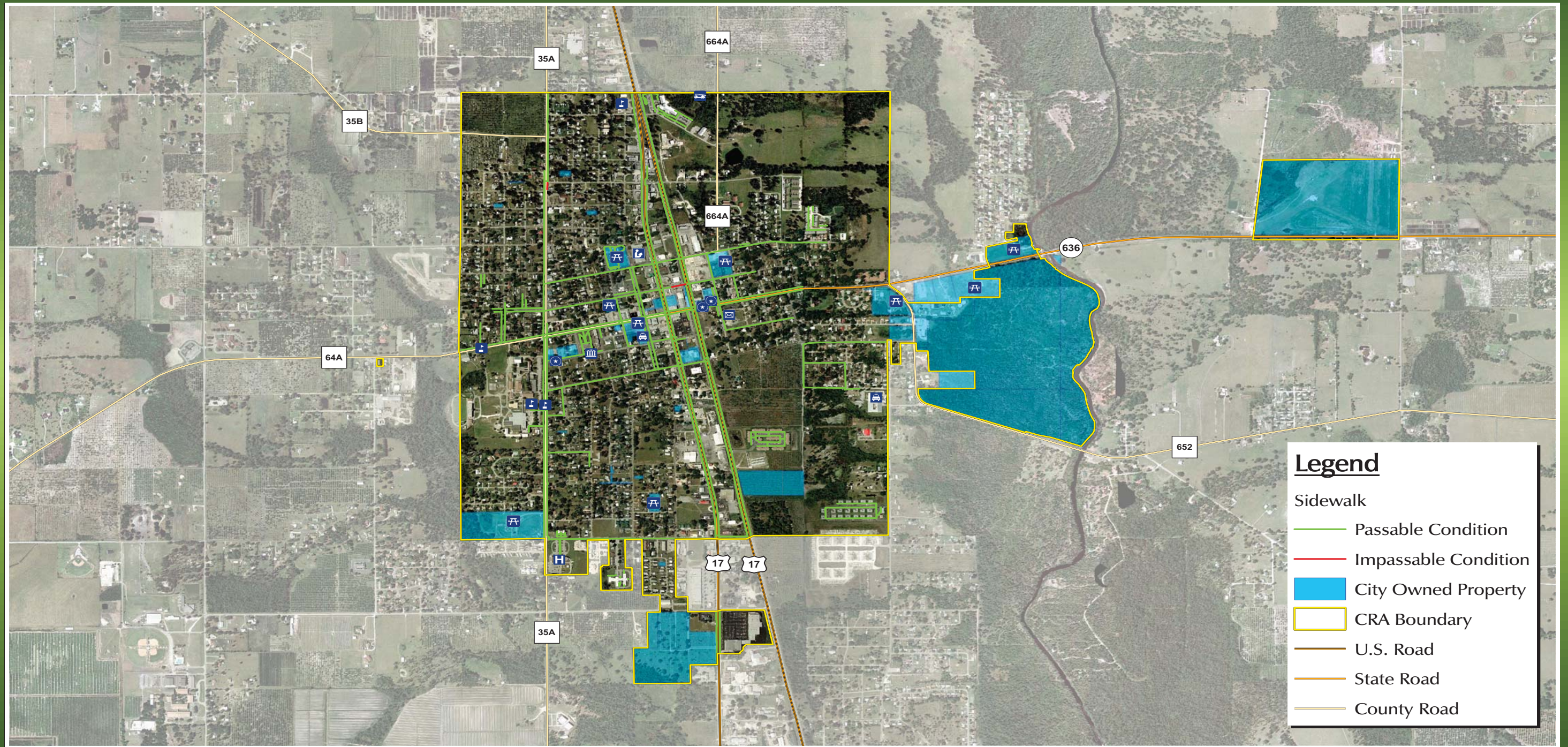
Downtown Parking

Presently, the main concern for parking is centered in the downtown business district, an area where parking is vital to the economic life of Wauchula. Although there is sufficient parking to accommodate the present daily needs of local businesses, the downtown experiences parking problems at peak times and during the various special events that occur throughout the year. The downtown area also experiences the perception of a lack of parking due to the parking lot distribution, lack of ongoing construction and maintenance, and lot locations.



Main Street in the downtown area provides on-street parallel parking. The Courthouse, City government facility, City Hall, library and police station are all large parking demand generators that provide onsite parking. There are other demand generators at peak times, including “Friday Night Live” and “Grillin and Chillin” in the downtown which, because of their immense popularity, can experience parking shortages.

A windshield survey of the available parking facilities, both on-street and off-street, was undertaken within the Downtown Core. Currently there are approximately seven surface parking lots distributed throughout the downtown area including: Historic City Hall/Civic Auditorium, The Depot, CRA/Chamber of Commerce/Main Street Wauchula, west side of U.S. 17 South, old Police Department, Heritage Park, and the City Administration building. These areas provide approximately 175 spaces. There are additional parking facilities; however, these



City of Wauchula Community Redevelopment Agency

Existing Sidewalk Map

City of Wauchula, Florida

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0 375 750 1,500 Feet

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are privately owned or owned by Hardee County. In addition, there is ample on-street parking including approximately 120 spaces along Main Street between Florida Avenue and 4th Avenue.

To a certain extent, parking problems in the downtown are perceptual. The problem is perceived when having to walk more than one block to any destination if the pedestrian environment is un-shaded, poorly maintained, consists of vacant lots, or is otherwise unwelcoming. The problem can also exist where available parking facilities are poorly identified (i.e., lack of signage/wayfinding), and poorly maintained parking areas (i.e., lack of striping, cracked, buckling or missing pavement). As redevelopment takes place, property that is currently vacant will become developed providing the opportunity to create a more attractive pedestrian environment and inviting spaces. Through urban design techniques, including signage, and landscaping improvements, parking areas that are now perceived as being remote, will be better incorporated into the urban framework with new areas of interest for the pedestrian occupying their attention and effectively reducing the perception of inconvenience when walking from remote locations for special events.

The lack of a coordinated parking strategy for the Wauchula CRA, specifically in the downtown area, continues to frustrate both guests and merchants alike. Therefore, it is critical that a parking strategy for the downtown area be prepared. Parking in downtowns should be considered a public utility as well as an amenity. And as such, they should be comprehensively planned and collectively managed to make the most efficient use of this resource. The current arrangement of on-street parking and open surface lots (both publicly and privately owned) is haphazard at best and is not well keyed to the costs of management, the efficiency of distribution, nor the ability for the user to easily locate them.

The historic growth rate will not generate new parking demand. Rather, it will be the replacement of existing surface lots with buildings as well as the construction of new development that will generate this need. A comprehensive approach to parking in the downtown should include the potential for more efficient use of existing parking areas through resurfacing, re-striping, improved signage, landscaping and way finding, as well as the creation of new parking areas. The primary parking concerns are centered on the downtown area of Wauchula and not necessarily other areas within the CRA outside of this core area. Existing facilities including shopping centers, offices/medical facilities, and employment centers generally meet and/or exceed the parking needs for those specific areas and uses. The majority of areas outside of the downtown are residential in nature and do not require parking lots and facilities. The City's Land Development Code requires the installation of parking areas as part of new development.

Many people that express parking concerns usually desire closer parking rather than more parking. Prior to the CRA constructing any new parking areas, it is recommended that a comprehensive parking inventory and study be conducted.



This process will ensure that future decisions regarding public parking (on-street and off-street) are made based on accurate supply and demand data, as well as parking generators and lot locations.

There are several opportunities to increase parking in the downtown area of Wauchula. While there

are several key vacant areas that can be turned into convenient parking locations, one of the quickest and most efficient ways to gain additional parking spaces is to re-stripe existing public parking spaces. Specifically, the parking lot immediately east of U.S. 17 (southbound) and north of Main Street (behind the CRA/Main Street Wauchula offices) and the parking lot in the northwest quadrant of Main Street & 8th Avenue (private ownership) can be re-striped to add additional spaces. The re-striping can consist of not only new paint, but also a new design with a more efficient layout and internal accessibility (i.e. smaller spaces and improved design layout). While re-striping with a more efficient parking design layout will provide additional spaces, it cannot add capacity like a new parking field will. There are several key areas, such as behind the Coker Fuels building, that have been identified that can provide additional parking spaces in strategic locations (i.e. perceived by motorists to be closer to the activities that they are visiting, therefore they will utilize these new locations and park there).

A critical element to the full utilization of the existing parking spaces downtown, or any amenity or attraction in the CRA, is its ability to be found. While this may sound elementary, it is often an overlooked aspect that must be addressed. In addition, the cost of improved or additional signage to notify drivers where certain attractions or amenities are or “wayfinding” is much less expensive (and much more effective) than building new parking lots or recreational space that are difficult to find by even the long time resident.

An example of this is the lack of signage for existing parking in the downtown

area. While there is certainly a need for more convenient and additional parking in the downtown area, the lack of signage for the existing parking creates issues for drivers and visitors during peak periods, such as the “Friday Night Live” events, that are not familiar with the downtown core. The many parks and recreational amenities throughout the CRA could all benefit from additional signage strategically placed throughout the CRA and on widely traveled roadways such as U.S. 17. Signage to alert drivers where shopping, dining, parks, the YMCA, municipal buildings (City Hall/Library), etc. can be found is critical for the CRA.

It will be important for the CRA to install “wayfinding” signs to and from public parking areas. It is recommended that the City invest in a series of coordinated “wayfinding” signs to and from parking areas downtown so that visitors may easily navigate their way safely and quickly to their destinations as well as identify other points of interest that may not be easily known or located. The signs would be part of the City's existing “wayfinding” program to improve signage throughout downtown.

Improved Parking

The general condition of most of the existing parking lots throughout the downtown is fair to poor. From faded striping and cracked surfaces to poor parking space utilization, there are many opportunities to improve the parking capacity in the Wauchula downtown core. For example, the parking lots immediately adjacent to U.S. 17 (southbound) and north of Main Street, and the parking lot in the northwest quadrant of Main Street & 8th Avenue both can be improved through an improved parking lot layout design. Lighting, landscaping and sense of security contribute to the utilization of some parking areas. It is also important to strengthen the pedestrian paths from the parking fields to the destinations (enhanced sidewalks, clearly defined pedestrian realm, street furniture, lighting, etc.) which can and often do influence a decision to use or not use a parking area. In addition, the area behind the Coker Fuel Building, adjacent to the parking lot at Heritage Park can be constructed which could provide



TRANSPORTATION AND MOBILITY

approximately an additional 40 spaces.

It is important to incorporate on-street parking into street design, especially where lane-reductions occur which will assist in the development of complete streets. The most effective and inexpensive way to re-use extra asphalt is to create on-street parking along low-volume roadways. This practice simply entails re-striping the road surface and perhaps signing the spaces' availability for parking uses. Benefits include increased parking capacity, informal traffic calming (drivers must watch for persons entering/exiting their cars and spaces), easy access to destinations, and a safer pedestrian realm in that the cars acts as a buffer between the road and sidewalk.

Two of the strategic locations are the southeast quadrant of the Main Street & 8th Avenue intersection (Coker Fuel Building) and the northwest and northeast quadrant of the Main Street & U.S. 17 (southbound) intersection. Both of these locations provide vacant open space that may be utilized to increase the number of convenient parking spaces to help off-set the parking issues that developed around the peak periods for key events in the downtown area (i.e. Friday Night Live).

“Wayfinding” and Signage

Signage may be one of the most underutilized, yet most effective tools to help implement a new strategy and guide citizens quickly and efficiently to where they want to go. Wayfinding signage can include not only basic information including a site's name and general direction, but can also include a map illustrating the proximity of uses to one another. While there is some signage in the CRA, it is not consistent nor are some of the critical attractions in the CRA adequately identified. For example, with the incredible volume of traffic traveling on U.S. 17 through the City of Wauchula, there should be significantly more signage on areas north and south of U.S. 17 for both the downtown Main Street (and its plentiful shops and attractions) and the numerous parks and other recreational attractions within the CRA and the community.

Another example of the importance of signage and “wayfinding” is the number of recreational vehicle (RV) parks that are located in and around the CRA. There are over 10 RV Parks that cater to visitors from around the United States who often



have very little or no knowledge of the location of attractions in the Wauchula CRA. Specifically, the visitors of the Thousand Trails RV Park on U.S. 17 which is south of the City and CRA, could benefit greatly with new and improved signage. Visitors staying at Thousand Trails who want to travel up to the City/CRA are given no indication (i.e. no signage) of amenities in the City/CRA such as shopping, dining, library, etc. Only a single sign saying “Main Street” is evident on northbound U.S. 17. The same situation exists for most of the parks throughout the CRA. Visitors at many of the RV Parks around the City/CRA who may want to experience the recreational amenities of Peace River Park, Crews Riverside Park, Green Street Park, etc. but have no signage to lead them to these destinations. The RV parks are filled with visitors to the area that, with the proper guidance, can be major “supporters” to the many businesses and activities that the Wauchula CRA has to offer. Considerations to incorporate marketing and special events with identified easy parking can help support the continued success of downtown special events.

The CRA is currently in the final stages of its development of a “wayfinding” program and the implementation stage is imminent. It is critical that the signs be strategically located throughout the CRA and highlight major amenities of the CRA to enhance their visibility and ultimately their use. It is important that signage be focused on U.S. 17 and the gateways to the community and around many of the local RV parks and other high traffic areas and major attractors so that visitors not familiar with the City can be adequately educated to many of the CRA's amenities and not lose these guests to neighboring areas.

Proposed Pedestrian, Bicycle and Intersection Improvements

Transportation plans once focused solely on roadway solutions, with planners and local officials concentrating on commuter traffic and travel patterns. Today, it is understood that community travel is not limited to morning and afternoon rush hours, and each trip does not begin and end in the driver's seat. In fact, every trip begins and ends with a pedestrian trip. For improved quality of life, citizens now strive for livable communities that balance travel between modes. A common theme of any sustainable community is how



well it accommodates pedestrians and bicyclists, for both recreational and more utilitarian trips.

The value of walking and bicycling has numerous benefits, including:

- Personal benefits – Cardiovascular fitness and cost savings
- Societal benefits – Reduced vehicle miles of travel, improved public health through a cleaner environment and healthier citizens, and improved mobility for those without access to private automobiles
- Social benefits – Walkable communities tend to result in places where individuals know and interact more with nearby neighbors
- Environmental benefits – Reduced air and noise pollution and fewer parking lots/spaces/ structures

The existing bicycle and pedestrian network is limited. Wauchula has a limited network of bicycle facilities and routes. Roads in the urbanized portion of the study area are characterized by many driveways and curb-cuts, heavy traffic, and high speeds. The rural portion of the study area includes roads with narrow lanes and little, if any, shoulder areas.

The following recommendations represent specific changes targeted at improving Wauchula's pedestrian, bicycling and vehicular atmosphere. In general, the CRA should work towards solutions that promote not only connectivity within downtown but to and from the surrounding neighborhoods as well. The Market Analysis included in the Plan, notes the existing and future population and socio-economic conditions within the City. Currently, the City is experiencing the need for increased pedestrian mobility due to a growing segment of the population that relies on walking for a majority of their trips and destinations.

Sidewalk Improvements

The ability to move safely along and across a city's streets is a cornerstone of a community's transportation system. Every trip begins and ends as a walking trip, whether driving to the grocery store or walking to a neighborhood park. Still, walking often is forgotten when planning future improvements to



TRANSPORTATION AND MOBILITY

the transportation network. When a proper pedestrian environment exists, walking provides a practical choice and benefits both individuals and their communities. These benefits include improved personal health, reduced traffic congestion (and therefore improved air quality), and lower automobile parking demands. Furthermore, multi-lane roadways tend to be uninviting and often unsafe environments for pedestrians, especially when their pedestrian facilities are inadequate in design or completely absent. Features that contribute to walkable communities include a healthy mix of land uses, wide sidewalks, buffers between the edge of pavement and the sidewalk, and trees or canopies to shade walking routes connecting significant features and lighting where appropriate. Slowing traffic, narrowing streets to reduce pedestrian crossing distance and incorporating pedestrian infrastructure (i.e. signage, crosswalks, and adequate pedestrian phasing at signals) into future roadway design plans also make communities more walkable and inviting. While several destinations exist throughout the CRA, these locations are not always clustered nor are they always convenient to get to depending on the origin of the trip (e.g. Main Street, surrounding neighborhoods, offices). The best way to manage and encourage the journey between destinations is improved streetscapes, and new and updated sidewalks.

In order for walking to be considered a realistic transportation alternative in a community like the City of Wauchula and its surrounding areas, existing conditions need to be favorable for pedestrian use. Pedestrian-friendly areas have a logical system of interconnected facilities that allow for safe travel between origins and destinations. Typically, these facilities do not occur by accident but rather result from careful planning and diligent implementation. Like most downtown settings, sidewalks are present on many streets in downtown Wauchula. However, the quality of these sidewalks—both in form and function—varies. Moving away from the downtown core, pedestrian facilities are substandard or absent altogether, including in those areas where there are public and civic uses (i.e., parks and schools).

The streets, sidewalks, and bikeways within a City embody essential elements



contributing to the urban form and community character of the area. In fact in many cities, the right of way utilized by streets represents the largest area of publicly owned land. Streets, sidewalks, and bikeways provide critical connections to homes, jobs, schools, restaurants, parks, shops, and many other destinations. Even as goods, services and people move between destinations within the public right of way, streets provide a notion of how a city invests in its community. Wauchula's primary shopping areas, outside of the downtown area, are along the U.S. 17 corridor north and south in the Wal-Mart and Winn Dixie shopping centers (north) and the Sweetbay shopping center (south).

An efficient transportation system connects neighborhoods and activity centers via a network of streets, paths, and trails that are safe and supportive of pedestrians, bicyclists, cars and trucks. Such a system offers choice for short and long trips alike and promotes convenient movement of people and goods. The vision for the Wauchula CRA and the City involves the traditional philosophy of street planning. This vision includes an interconnected network of community-friendly streets that provides for the safe, effective, and efficient movement of all modes of travel including driving, walking, and cycling. All new and improved transportation options should understand the land use/transportation connection by supporting established neighborhoods while anticipating new growth and changing travel patterns.

A network of different size streets encourages connectivity and balances the need for mobility with the need for access to properties adjacent to roadways. While these exist in only limited areas in the City, narrow two-lane streets with on-street parking and safe pedestrian crossings provide an environment accessible for pedestrians, bicyclists, and motorists. While in contrast, multi-lane roads with landscaped medians provide more mobility. Both types of facilities are needed in communities, and determining how and where to use each type of street requires careful consideration of both land use and transportation. The transportation network in the Wauchula CRA includes a range of street types that serve various roles in the existing transportation system, offer



unique opportunities to balance access and mobility, and unite land use and transportation.

To improve sidewalk connectivity to surrounding neighborhoods, the first priority should be to fill in the missing "gaps" in the system. Therefore, it is recommended that the CRA/City work with the County to develop a Sidewalk Design Manual and Pedestrian and Bicycle Master Plan. To best incorporate all the recommended changes, the City of Wauchula should undertake a separate, specific effort to catalog, plan, and implement improvements of the pedestrian realm throughout the CRA. This report should serve as a foundation upon which future work can build, such as possible recommendations to create a Greenway/Blueway Trail plan for the community.

There are many attractions throughout the Wauchula CRA, including Main Street in downtown Wauchula, the YMCA, Oak Street Park, Heritage Park, Farr Field, Peace River Park, etc. just to name a few. What is missing for many and these attractions however is a safe and well marked route for pedestrians and bicyclists to reach them. Safe routes can be provided to these destinations mainly through the creation of sidewalks and bike lanes throughout the CRA and the community. The first step in providing more safe routes for the citizens of Wauchula to its many attractions is through the development of the Pedestrian and Bicycle Master Plan for the CRA and the surrounding areas. This plan will provide a prioritized improvement list of these areas where the addition or upgrade of a sidewalk will benefit the CRA. It is critical that the Pedestrian and Bicycle Master Plan tie into and be developed in conjunction with County wide plans for sidewalk and bike lane creation.

There is an existing Safe Routes to School (SRTS) program in Florida that encompasses routes and techniques used to encourage children to walk or cycle to or from school. The SRTS program is a federal reimbursement program to enable and encourage children in grades K-8 to walk and cycle to school; to make walking and cycling to school safer and more appealing; and to facilitate the planning, development and implementation of projects that will improve safety and reduce traffic, fuel consumption, and air pollution in the vicinity of schools. This program would benefit Wauchula due to the fact that there are inadequate sidewalks within the areas around the City's existing school to support the pedestrian activities. Fortunately, the SRTS program also seeks to address the safety needs of children already walking or cycling in less than ideal conditions.

A Pedestrian and Bicycle Master Plan can be developed to define areas for pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure improvements. The Plan would also outline proposed locations for crosswalks and signalized pedestrian crossings, bicycle routes, and trails. The Plan initially would address the downtown area

TRANSPORTATION AND MOBILITY

of Wauchula and be expanded to encompass the CRA as a whole and surrounding areas.

The City's new Skate Park is a prime example of how connectivity (though sidewalks) can help an attraction. The Skate Park has a steady stream of children that utilize this unique recreational venue. However, with no sidewalks on Oak Street or 3rd Avenue adjacent to the park, a child's path to the park from the surrounding neighborhoods is along or on the street, a safety concern that should be addressed. Oak Street Park is a similar example. An incredible amenity to the CRA and City, this Park lacks the true connectivity (of sidewalks for pedestrians and bicyclists alike) to be able to provide a safe route for citizens to travel (outside of the automobile) and enjoy the parks resources.



These two examples are not isolated. From Ausley Memorial Park to Seminole Park, to Green Street Park to Peace River Park, the need for connectivity throughout and outside of the CRA, for not only safety, but also for increased modes of travel (mobility), is a critical issue that should be addressed.

Street connectivity refers to the directness of routes and the density of connection within a transportation system. As connectivity increases, travel distances decrease and route options increase, allowing the transportation system to be used more efficiently by the automobiles, pedestrians, and bicyclists. Connectivity improves circulation and allows for street designs that can be responsive to the practical needs of the City and CRA. Rather than streets assuming a more suburban form with multiple lanes, no or limited parking and dedicated turn lanes, the street can be a place where wide sidewalks, on-street parking and pedestrian trips are possible.

Many communities evolved prior to the development of specific guidelines for sidewalks design and placement, and as a result, these communities have sidewalks conditions that are less than ideal. Still, any sidewalk is better than no sidewalk. Therefore, focusing on sidewalk maintenance as well as the construction of new sidewalks (where links are missing) is important.

As continued investment occurs in the CRA (i.e. downtown and surrounding neighborhoods), it will be important to have the Pedestrian and Bicycle Master Plan and Sidewalk Design Manual to guide sidewalk construction prioritization that addresses requirements for infill and redevelopment projects as well as future roadway streetscapes projects and other roadway improvements. Primary concerns related to sidewalk construction include the planning, prioritization, placement and design of sidewalks.

Bicycle Improvements

As a part of Pedestrian and Bicycle Master Plan, it is recommended to create a Bicycle Friendly Streets Map where certain corridors will be identified for bike lanes and signed bike routes. The roadways to be recommended as Bicycle Friendly Streets will include neighborhood streets with existing design features and traffic volumes that make them more conducive to bicycle travel. Ultimately, a system of greenways is recommended to connect with these facilities and provide access to parks and other destinations. Together, these bicycle facilities will create an interconnected network of safe and convenient paths. While the recommendations noted above are not a substitute for an overall Bicycle Master Plan, they do represent an initial strategy for consideration by bicycle advocates.

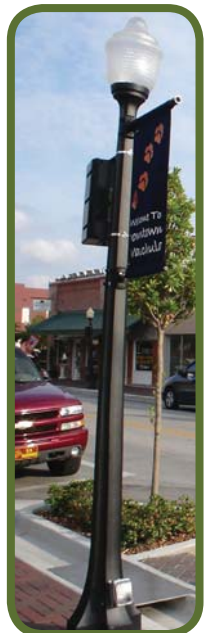


In an effort to minimize ad hoc implementation and to avoid disconnected facilities including increased opportunities for grant funding, it is recommended that the Wauchula CRA include a comprehensive Master Plan for bicycle facilities as part of their Pedestrian and Bicycle Master Plan. Local bicycle advocates should be included in the process as well as the general public. The result will be a plan that includes an interconnected and coordinated system of bicycle facilities and routes that works in concert with bicycle-friendly streets and greenways to provide safe and effective bicycling in Wauchula.

One of the more encouraging characteristics of the downtown transportation network is that it remains fairly well connected. The grid network is most evident in the area between Bay Street and Oak Street. Other areas have some connectivity, though it exists somewhat in a hybrid grid network. Still, the potential for a well connected transportation network within the CRA exists by implementing short-and long-term solutions including pedestrian and bicycle related connections. This potential is representative of many successful CRA's and consistently is cited as a crucial element that promotes balanced street design.

Lighting Improvements

In order for sidewalks, bicycle paths, and parking areas to be properly utilized, they must be established with safety in mind. One of the key elements to safety in each of these facilities is proper lighting. Each of these facilities will be utilized in the daytime, but without proper lighting and other safety features their use at night will drastically decrease. Therefore, it is important to include the design of adequate lighting for new facilities that will be developed in the CRA. In addition, improved lighting should be considered for existing facilities (sidewalks in the downtown, parking areas at existing parks, etc.) in the CRA. When planning these improvements, it is important to focus on the use of alternative energy usage for street lights (i.e. LED, solar), cross-walks, parking lot lighting, parks and similar improvements.



Intersection Improvements

While there are currently pedestrian features at the intersection of U.S. 17 (northbound and southbound) and Main Street such as crosswalks and pedestrian countdown "signals", the crossing of the high volume U.S. 17 roadway by pedestrians is still perceived as intimidating due to the length of the crossing and the high speed and volume of vehicles on U.S. 17. Due to the land uses east of U.S. 17 such as residential, bed and breakfasts, park and recreational, there is a need to address this issue for pedestrians that come from this area who want to travel to downtown Wauchula.

Possible improvements for these intersections (and other cross street or mid-block intersections with U.S. 17) include additional pedestrian safety enhancements such as the Pedestrian Crosswalk LED "stutter" light warning system that is currently being utilized in the City of St. Petersburg (first installed in 2006) with very

positive results. The “Enhancer” as it is called, was the first traffic signal device in the nation to utilize super bright LED technology and a “stutter flash”. When the “Enhancer” activation button is pushed, a friendly voice explains to pedestrians how to use the crosswalk. At night, the button placards are illuminated so pedestrians can see them. Upon activation, the entire area is illuminated, including where the pedestrian is standing, all signs and the roadway are bright so motorists can clearly see the entire crossing. The “Enhancer” system is radio controlled and solar powered for maximum efficiency.

Additional Improvements

- The City and CRA should incorporate “Complete Streets” practices and programs into all retrofits and new roadway construction, where feasible. Complete streets is a term used nationally to describe the transformation of vehicle-dominated thoroughfares in urban and suburban areas into community-oriented streets that safely and conveniently accommodate all modes of travel, not just motorists. Complete Streets are thoroughfares that serve all users, moving by car, truck, transit, bicycle, wheelchair or foot. Complete streets allow all their users to travel in a safer and more welcoming way.

Many streets lack sidewalks, few accommodate bicyclists well, most encourage traffic to travel close to pedestrians and fast, and many don’t have curb ramps at intersections or across driveways. The development of a “complete streets” program will help avoid these situations and help ensure that all road projects result in a complete street appropriate to local context and needs.

- The City and CRA should establish a Retrofit Connectivity Program. In order to expand and enhance the existing transportation network, especially for pedestrians and cyclists, Wauchula should consider a funded program to identify, prioritize, and construct bicycle and pedestrian connections between existing neighborhoods and other developed areas. Such projects might entail the construction of a pedestrian bridge across a creek, or connecting stubbed streets. These retrofit connectivity projects are relatively inexpensive when compared to traditional transportation projects, but have far reaching active living and transportation benefits when a short connection can provide access to miles of the transportation network that were previously unlinked.
- The City and CRA should incorporate Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) principles into the design and development of public accessible spaces. CPTED is a multi-disciplinary

approach to deterring criminal behavior through environmental design that includes design elements that promote an environment of safety in a community. CPTED’s goal is to prevent crime by designing a physical environment based on four principles: natural access control, natural surveillance, territoriality, and maintenance.

Truck Route

The Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT), working in conjunction with the City of Wauchula, established a truck route to address volumes and turning movements for trucks within the downtown areas. Specifically, the route addresses truck traffic travelling south on U.S. 17 and then heading east on Main Street. Prior to this designation, trucks were permitted to perform a left turn movement from U.S. 17 South onto E. Main Street.

The designated truck route for southbound trucks on U.S. 17 calls for a left-turn onto Palmetto Street, north of Main Street, across U.S. 17 north and then a right-turn onto 4th Avenue down to Main Street. The main reason for this route was to help avoid the situation of trucks turning eastbound from U.S. 17 onto Main Street and clipping cars that are parked on the south side of Main Street as well as street lights, banners and buildings. The current design at and near the intersection of U.S. 17 (southbound) and Main Street provides on-street parking on the south side of Main Street and with the current location of the stop bar for westbound Main Street, trucks making that southbound left-turn from U.S. 17 to Main Street often are not able to make an adequate turn and encroach on the space where vehicles could or are parked. Therefore, the alternative was developed. There are still some, albeit minimal, trucks that do not utilize the truck route; however, the route is an improvement over the previous condition. With additional (increased) signage and greater recognition of the truck route, it is anticipated that truck conflicts at this core intersection to the CRA and downtown will be minimized over time. While the truck route has helped re-direct the travel path of some trucks away from making the southbound left-turn from U.S. 17 to Main Street, trucks making this movement have not



completely been eliminated. Therefore, it is recommended that the City increase its enforcement of the truck route and that additional signage be considered to help direct trucks to the proper route.

Potential Funding Sources

Planning, design, and implementation are all critical components of a successful plan. With limited funding resources, however, implementation can be challenging and time consuming. With this in mind, potential funding sources have been developed to help local staff focus their efforts and seek strategic opportunities to expedite the implementation of this plan. The Wauchula CRA Master Plan Update represents an important step toward implementing multimodal improvements that affect travel safety, mobility, development patterns and the aesthetics of Wauchula. Possible funding opportunities for these types of improvements include Safe Routes To School, Florida Forever, Kodak American Greenways Program, and Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance Program (RTCA). More detailed information on these opportunities is included in the Funding & Grants section of the Plan.