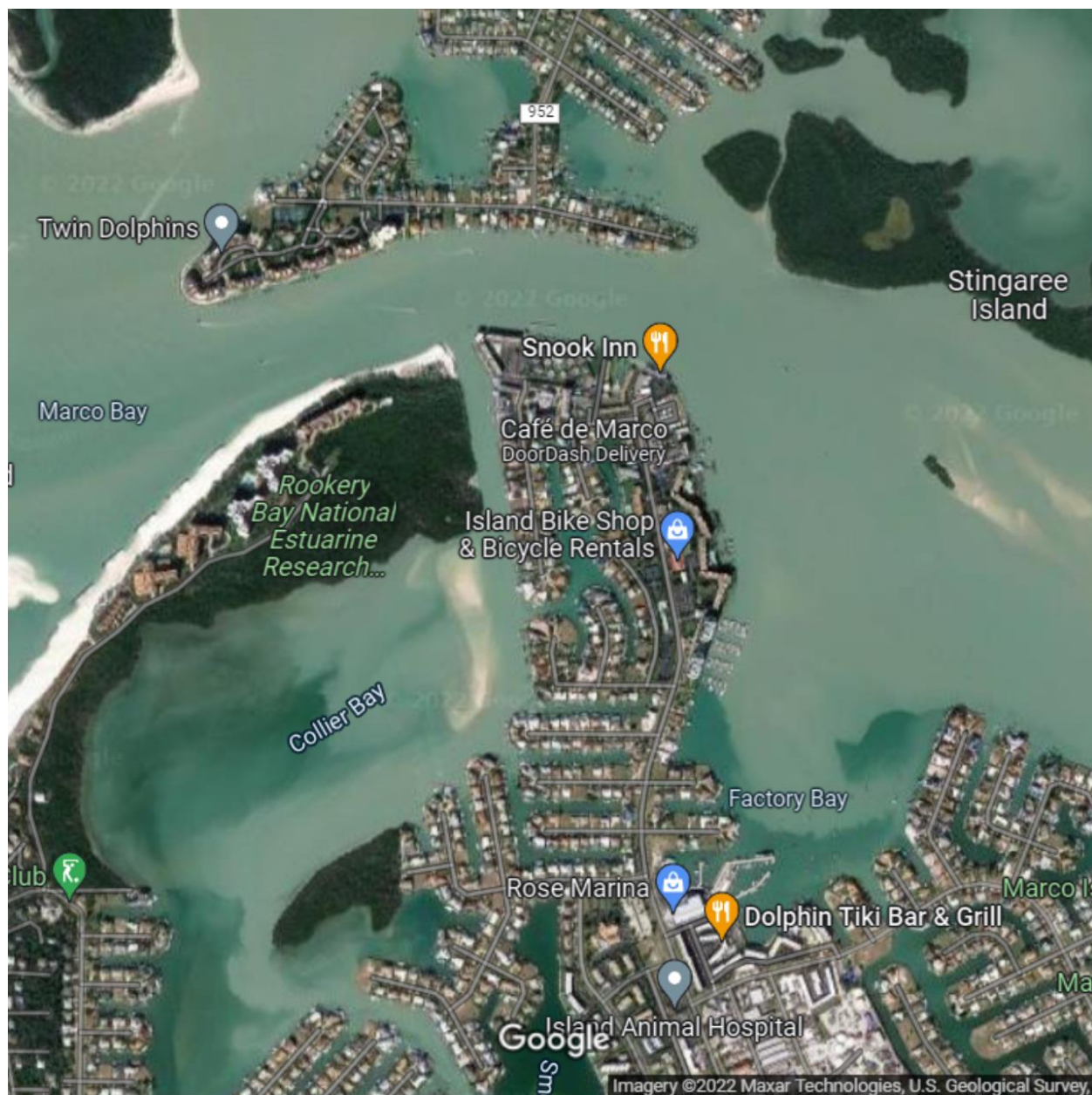


White Paper: 10 Point Action Plan Regarding Olde Marco Parking & Traffic Flow
Councilman Rich Blonna
Planning Board Member Hayden Dublois



Desired Action: Motion to approve the 10 Point Action Plan Regarding Old Marco Parking and Traffic Flow

Statement of the Problem:

Over the past several years, the stress placed on the public infrastructure and residents of the Olde Marco district has increased substantially. The historic nature of this portion of our island requires the city to pay particular attention to the preservation of the character of the area, balanced with the needs of our local economy.

Over the past several years, policy changes (such as the loosening of parking ratio requirements and the discontinuation of regular traffic counts) coupled with an increase in visitation to the island—as well as an increase in the island’s overall population—has exacerbated the underlying situation. Over the last three years, roughly 600 new building permits have been issued and over 400 new Homestead applications have been processed. Similarly, over the last decade, approximately 1,000 new homes have been built on the island. These changes necessitate a re-examination of policy.

Consistent with the Comprehensive Plan, it is imperative that the city maintains the appropriate balance between preserving the character of this historic portion of our island—including the livelihood of residents—with the ingredients necessary to support our local economy. To that end, this white paper makes several policy recommendations that will better align the City’s actions and land development code (LDC) with the goals in its Comprehensive Plan. Importantly, many of these ideas are drawn from recommendations that were previously considered by past parking solutions studies (in both 2019 and 2012).

Policy Goals as Outlined in Comprehensive Plan:

- Policy 1.2.5: *“The City will support a strong local economy balanced with protection of the Island’s character by maintaining current limitations on parking, signage, intensity and other elements that impact the public realm and quality of life on the Island.”*
- Policy 7.1.4: *“The City will protect and enhance the Olde Marco district as a central component of the City’s historical resources.”*
- Policy 7.1.5: *“The City will seek sources of funding for the acquisition of natural, cultural, and historic resources that are best preserved through public means, or public/private partnerships.”*

The Solution

Phase 1: Immediate Relief for Residents

Action Item #1: Adjust Parking Ratios in Olde Marco

Proposal: Revise Sec. 30-488 (“Minimum parking requirements”) of the LDC to adjust the parking ratio for sit-down restaurants from 1 parking space per 4 seats to 1 parking space per 3 seats. Adjust the indoor and outdoor drinking establishments (Lounge, bar bottle-club, nightclub, pool hall) parking from 1 parking spot per 50 square ft. indoors and 1 spot per 75 sq. ft outdoors to 1 parking spot per 40 sq. ft. indoors and outdoors. Existing parking arrangements will be grandfathered; this will only apply to new construction or re-development. The City Council might consider creating a special Olde Marco District Overlay to accommodate these and other proposed changes.

Justification: This will reduce the parking pressure from new restaurants and new drinking establishments in Olde Marco and require a more balanced ratio, closer to that of the pre-2014 parking ratio changes. The inclusion of a Olde Marco-specific parking ratio for restaurants and drinking establishments is in recognition of the uniqueness of the neighborhood in terms of intensity and historical significance.

Action Item #2: Adjust Parking Credits Island-Wide

Proposal: Revise Sec. 30-484 (“Locational requirements for off-street parking facilities”) of the LDC to remove parking credits for pedestrian access (item b) and recycling facilities (item e). Existing parking credits will be grandfathered; this will only apply to new construction or redevelopment.

Justification: The numerous parking credits that presently exist in the LDC may not actually be directly tied to parking (e.g., a credit for recycling bins). In other instances—such as for pedestrian sidewalks—these features should be treated as reasonable expectations of responsible businesses, rather than as rewards. We recommend leaving in the credit for bicycle racks as a way to encourage access via this mode of transportation, especially for area residents.

Action Item #3: Eliminate Swale and Other Street Parking on Palm Street except during Holiday Exemption Period

Proposal: Presently, patrons of businesses are able to park in the swales along Palm Street, including in front of residential condominiums and homes. The proposal would prohibit all swale and other street parking along Palm Street except during the Holiday exemption period.



Justification: The character of the neighborhood, intensity, and satisfaction of residents is adversely affected by numerous patrons parking on what is essentially their front lawns on a regular basis. By prohibiting this practice in this portion of Olde Marco, the city would restore the area's residential character and give greater peace of mind to residents. The loss of parking along Palm Street will be made up with additional metered parking along Bald Eagle and elsewhere (see Action Items #8 and #10).

Action Item #4: Conduct Regular Traffic Counts of All Arterial and Collector Streets

Proposal: Conduct quarterly traffic counts on all arterial and collector streets on the island.

Justification: Past traffic counts serve as the basis for traffic impact studies conducted by businesses looking to develop new ventures on Marco Island. However, the last regular traffic count occurred in 2012—a decade ago and did not include studying Bald Eagle Drive to Palm Street. Instead, traffic counts have continued on merely a piecemeal basis, where certain projects have utilized traffic counts and others have not (at the discretion of the City). This can lead to inaccurate conclusions of the level of service in traffic impact studies. Conducting quarterly traffic counts would offer an improved basis of information for future traffic impact studies, especially in areas like Olde Marco that lack multiple ingress and egress points.

Action Item #5: Continue to Improve Enforcement of Traffic Violations in Olde Marco

Proposal: Work with the Police Department to continue to increase enforcement of traffic violations along Bald Eagle, especially where it intersects with Palm Street.

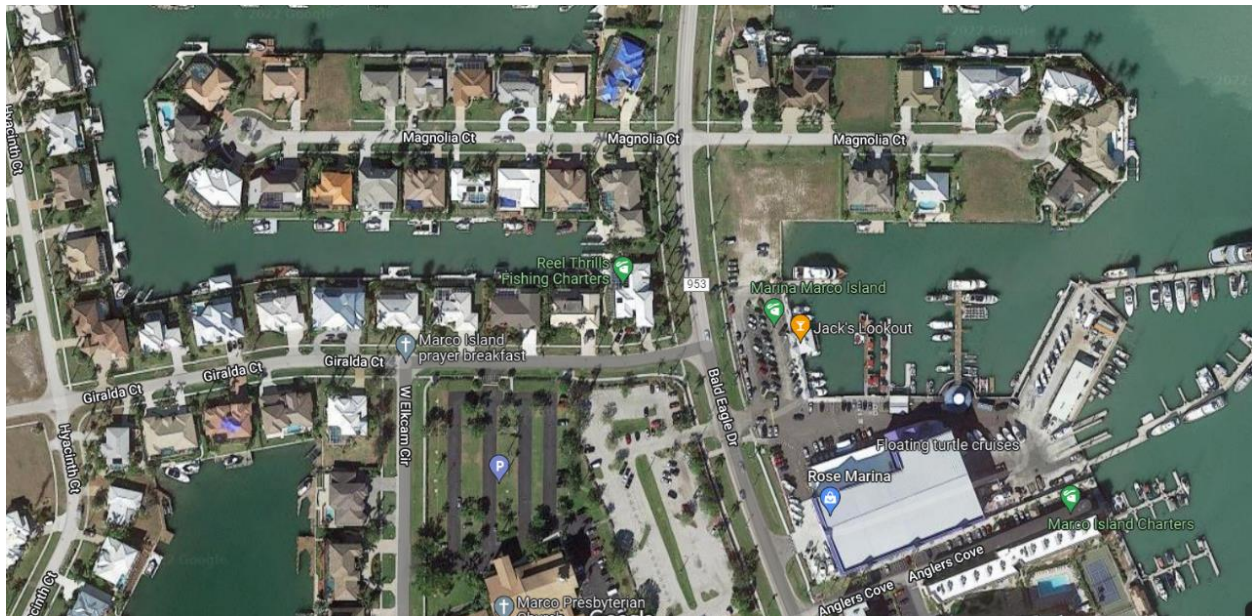
Justification: Currently, the three-way stop located at the intersection of Bald Eagle Drive and Palm Street is often ignored by vehicles, as is the speed limit along the northern portion of Bald Eagle Drive. This poses a significant risk for pedestrians and vehicles alike, and has resulted in

an unsafe situation for both residents and patrons. The Police Department should consider continuing their increased enforcement of traffic violations in this area.

Phase 2: Improve the Entrance to Olde Marco

Action Item #6: - Add New Roadway Safety Measures\ and Additional Parking Capacity at 981 and 991 Bald Eagle Drive

Proposal: Explore building a “speed table” in the vicinity of the Rose Marina (which is where the speed limit mentioned in Item #8 would be reduced) coupled with additional parking capacity for the marina.



Justification: There is a desire by the owners of these contiguous parcels of land to use them to safely expand the parking capacity of the Rose Marina by minimizing the number of patrons who have to cross over Bald Eagle Drive to access their businesses. Moreover, there are presently safety issues in this area, including recent accidents between vehicles and pedestrians. The Rose Marina has given a preliminary indication that they are willing to consider adding a speed table to the roadway just prior to where their overflow parking lot crosses Bald Eagle Drive. A speed table is a slightly raised section of roadway with reflectors and road strips that alert drivers to the impending crossing and reduced speed limit ahead. The reduction in the speed limit to the Olde Marco level (described in Item #8) would begin at this point.

Phase 3: Improve the Approach Throughout Olde Marco

Action Item #7: Extend Pedestrian Bike Paths through Olde Marco

Proposal: Extend the bike paths that runs along Bald Eagle Drive to the intersection of Bald Eagle and Palm Street.

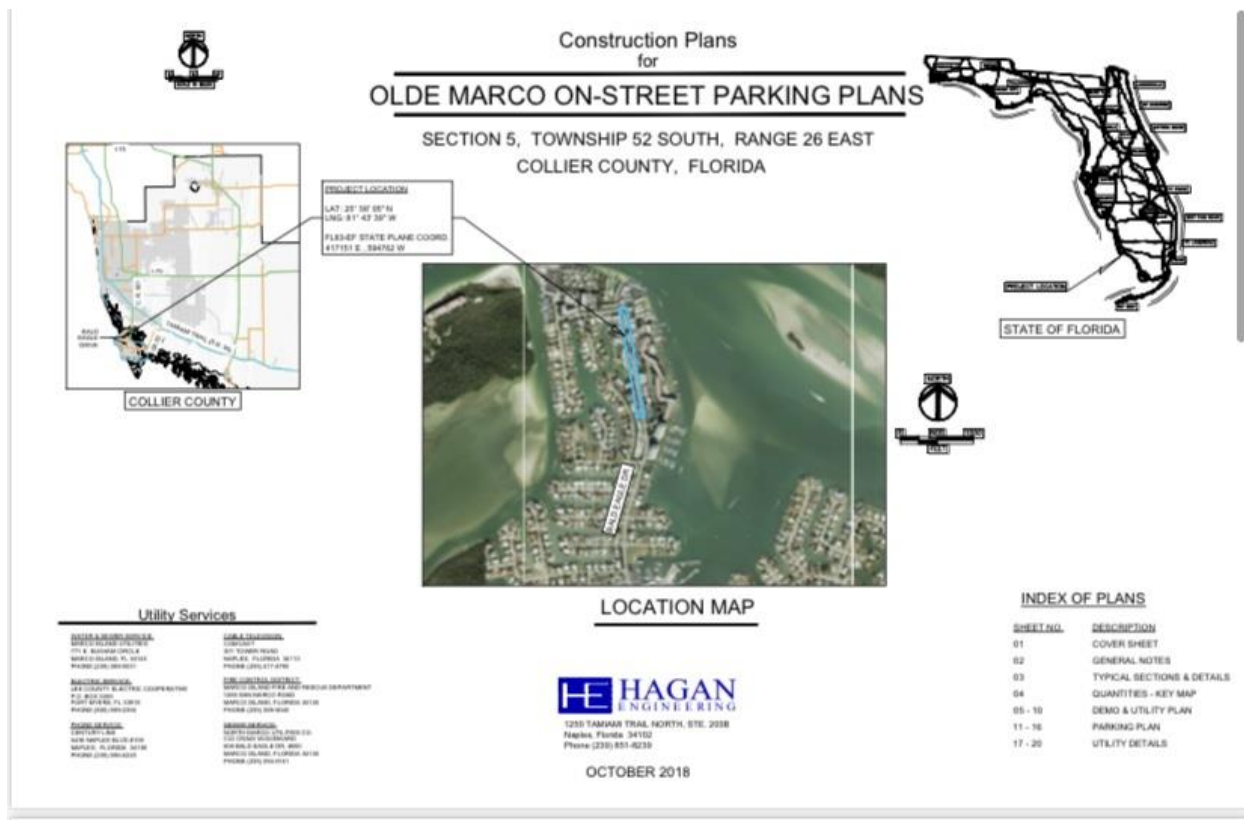
Justification: Currently, there is no bike path servicing Olde Marco along Bald Eagle. The new multi-use path, currently used by some cyclists, stops across the street from Pier 81. Having a bike path in the street that continues along Bald Eagle Drive to Palm Street, would accommodate cyclists while freeing up congestion on the busy sidewalk from Pier 81 to Palm Street. The lack of a bicycle lane inhibits the ability of bicyclists to easily access the restaurants and other amenities in Olde Marco, which could otherwise reduce traffic pressure. Moreover, the only bicycle rental shop on the island is currently located in Olde Marco beyond where the existing bike path ends. Extending this path would accommodate bicycle renters as well as patrons of businesses and residents.

Action Item #8: Adopt the Olde Marco Parking Plan with Several Contingencies

Proposal: The Olde Marco Parking Plan represents years of hard work by volunteer residents and City Staff. If enacted, it would improve roadway conditions and add approximately 60 additional metered parking spaces along Bald Eagle through the addition of pervious pavers where the swale currently exists. Importantly, it should be adopted with the following modifications:

- The adjustment of parking ratios, as outlined in Item #1.
- The addition of pedestrian bike paths through Olde Marco along both sides of Bald Eagle as outlined in Item #7;
 - This bike paths would be 4.6 ft. wide and eliminate approximately 12 of the parking spaces along the right (east) side of the road that were part of the original parking plan. However, this amount would be made up via the possible additional parking capacity described in Item #10. No parking spots would be lost on north side of the road.
- The prohibition on swale parking along Palm Street, as outlined in Item #3.
- A reduction in the speed limit for Olde Marco to 25 miles per hour, beginning at the Rose Marina (see Item #6).
- The use of metered parking spots along Bald Eagle Drive and elsewhere.
 - “Meters” have evolved to the point where they no longer physically exist. Parking is paid via a machine that is located within easy walking distance of several spots. Parking can be paid directly from cell-phone to meter without having to return from dinner, etc. to “go feed the meter.” Resident stickers or cell-phone-based widgets could provide free or discounted parking to Marco Island residents.

Justification: The amended Olde Marco Parking Plan would increase parking capacity, improve vehicle flow, and reduce traffic congestion. Metered parking revenues would be dedicated to paying down the cost of the plan. In addition, it would address residents’ concerns about bicycle and pedestrian safety.



Phase 4: Improve the Center of Old Marco

Action Item #9: Explore the development a circular traffic pattern at the end of Bald Eagle Drive by building a new alley that connects Lee Avenue to Tampa Place via Kerr Court.

Proposal: Explore a public-private partnership to develop a circular traffic pattern that would run from Lee Ave parallel to Bald Eagle Drive and connect with Kerr Court—which, via Tampa Place, would accommodate a one-way circular traffic scheme.

Justification: Currently, the only point of ingress and egress in Olde Marco is Bald Eagle Drive. This creates unsafe traffic conditions at the junction of Bald Eagle Dr., Palm St., and Lee Ave. as patrons search for parking and enter and exit the businesses at the north end of the island. The City, in exchange for the right of way for a single lane, one way road, would build an asphalt-covered alley, “New Lane”, that would run parallel to Bald Eagle Drive and connect Lee Ave. to Tampa Pl. via Kerr Ct. New Lane would run behind the properties on Bald Eagle Drive from 1202 all the way to the 1141. This one-way alley would safely redirect traffic away from the bottleneck at the junction of Lee Avenue, Bald Eagle Drive, and Palm Street.



Action Item #10: Explore the Creation of a Riverwalk Park Around 1219 Lee Avenue with Additional Metered Public Parking

Proposal: Explore the potential for the public development of a Riverwalk Park located around 1219 Lee Avenue (via the acquisition of the existing property) with a riverfront promenade with shade trees, benches, and 100 + metered parking spots.



Justification: The addition of new parking capacity will help ease the existing congestion in Olde Marco, reduce the likelihood of traffic incidents or violations, and make it easier for visitors to find a parking location. Additionally, the creation of a new city park will reduce future density and intensity, as well as provide a beautiful vista and additional capacity for parking that would enhance property values and the quality of life of the area. Acquisition of the existing property located at 1219 Lee Avenue would also include the current paved road serving the property. This could serve as the beginning of the aforementioned New Lane in Action Item #9.