



**Board of County Commissioners
Leon County, Florida**

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**Agenda Item
Executive Summary**

March 23, 2010

Title:

Consideration of a Request for the Donation or Lease of the Gadsden Street Parking Lot to the Riley House/Museum for the Creation of Legacy Park

Staff:

Parwez Alam, County Administrator

Alan Rosenzweig, Assistant County Administrator

Kim Dressel, Senior Assistant to the County Administrator

Issue Briefing:

This agenda item seeks the Board's direction regarding a proposal received for the County to donate or lease the Gadsden Street parking lot to the Riley House/Museum for the creation of Legacy Park.

Fiscal Impact:

If the Board does not donate or lease the Gadsden Street parking lot to the Riley House/Museum, this item has no fiscal impact. If the Board pursues donation or lease of the lot in accordance with the Riley House/Museum's proposal: (1) the County would lose the use of the Gadsden Street parking lot, which it purchased for \$1.5 million in 2003; and (2) it would cost \$100,000+/year, at current parking rates, to transition employees to the City's parking garage.

Staff Recommendation:

Option #1: Do not donate or lease the Gadsden Street parking lot to the Riley House/Museum.

Option #2: Continue to coordinate with the Riley House/Museum for its annual fund raiser/new exhibit display, Rock-a-thon, and Blended Lives program.

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Report and Discussion

Background:

A January 29, 2009 agenda item sought the Board's approval to enter into a parking meter agreement with the City of Tallahassee for 30 public parking spaces: 10 located on the top level of the Bank of America Plaza (BOA) and 20 located on the Gadsden Street lot. The meters were being sought to provide increased short-term public access to the County's downtown facilities, at minimal cost. The need for additional public parking has been raised repeatedly by various offices located in the BOA, including the Property Appraiser, Clerk and Supervisor of Elections, as well as the Courts. The Board approved the execution of the parking meter agreement and plans to reconfigure parking spaces for the top level of the BOA parking deck and the Gadsden Street lot, and asked staff to discuss how the County could partner with the Riley House and other local historic sites relative to the Gadsden Street lot. When reconfigured, the Gadsden Street lot will provide approximately 98 employee parking spaces in addition to the 20 public metered spaces.

County staff has worked with the Riley House/Museum to coordinate its use of the Gadsden Street lot to accommodate parking for the following annual events:

- (1) fund raiser/new exhibit display;
- (2) Rock-a-thon, held in December; and
- (3) 3-day Blended Lives program for 4th graders.

Only the Blended Lives program is held during the work week, and it requires closing approximately 20 parking spaces for three County business days. The other two events are held on weekends and do not disrupt the use of the Gadsden Street parking lot.

Implementation of the plans for the Gadsden Street lot was delayed when the need to initiate immediate repairs to the Traffic Court building presented itself soon thereafter. As the Board was advised in an April 9, 2009 agenda item, the Traffic Court building was closed for renovation and activities typically scheduled there, including traffic infractions hearings and trials, small claims court, mediation, teen court, landlord tenant and certain county civil cases, were relocated to the Courthouse. To accommodate this increased downtown parking demand, approximately 75 parking spaces were made available for the relocated Court functions in the Gadsden Street parking lot and approximately 30 employees were relocated from the Gadsden Street parking lot to the City's Calhoun Street parking garage.

Staff was recently presented a Program and Conceptual Design for Riley/Leon County Legacy Park (Attachment #1), which requests the County to consider and take appropriate action to:

“Option 1: Create “Legacy Park”, complimenting the Cascades corridor, to serve as a catalyst to help stimulate tourism and economic development. Use the Riley House and the other referenced contributing structures as a “tourism hub” location. Establish a satellite location of the Leon County Tourist Development at the Riley House/Legacy Park, with both entities having collaborative oversight for management and operations.

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Option 2: Lease to the Riley House for \$1.00 per year the lot at the corner of West Pensacola and South Meridian Streets to accommodate the on-going cultural programs to serve the entire community, or make an outright donation of the lot to the Riley House for this purpose. Riley House would pursue addition of amenities.”

Staff met with Ms. Althemese Barnes, Director of Riley House/Museum, on February 26, 2010, to discuss their proposal. During the meeting, staff shared with Ms. Barnes the plans for reconfiguring the Gadsden Street lot that the Board had approved; mentioned the 20 metered spaces would be available for use by Riley House/Museum patrons; and provided her with a high-level assessment of the financial impact to the County if it lost use of the lot.

Staff is seeking the Board’s direction in response to this request from the Riley House/Museum, which includes its acquisition of the Gadsden Street lot, either as a direct donation or lease at the rate of \$1.00 per year.

Analysis:

The Riley House/Museum proposes that the County adopt and implement the Legacy Park proposal. The Legacy Park - Concept and Design is described in Attachment #1, beginning on page 7. The proposal includes the addition of a “shotgun” house as a contributing structure in Legacy Park, and states, “A “shotgun” house has been donated to the Riley House, contingent upon it being moved to the Pensacola/South Meridian lot from Monday Street.” The Pensacola/South Meridian lot is the County’s Gadsden Street parking lot. The Riley House proposes to restore the shotgun house as an example of a 1900-to late 1950’s family dwelling that was typical in many rural and urban communities. It would be open to the public for viewing during community functions and available and accessible for schoolchildren for field trips and to other visitors and tourists. It would be landscaped with walkways that lead to the historic Riley House (Attachment #1, page 8).

As to the request to establish a satellite location of the Tourist Development Council (TDC) at the Riley House/Legacy Park, Mr. Lee Daniel, Tourism Development Department Director, advised Ms. Barnes, during a meeting on February 26, 2010, that the TDC does not have the funding necessary at this time to increase the level of visitor services offered and does not anticipate such an expansion could be provided through volunteer services at no additional cost, based on recent experience at the Visitor Information Center being operated at 106 East Jefferson Street.

As to evaluating the proposal that the County either donate or lease the Gadsden Street lot to the Riley House/Museum for \$1.00 per year, it is important to consider what the County paid for the lot and what the loss of the lot would mean to the County in the short and long-term.

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County Acquisition – Purchase Price and Reasons for Purchase: The lack of space to meet the needs of the County and those entities for which the County is required to provide facilities (the Courts, Clerk of Courts, State Attorney, Public Defender, Guardian Ad Litem, Property Appraiser, Tax Collector and Supervisor of Elections) became critical in 2002. After evaluating a series of options, the County purchased the BOA and the Gadsden Street parking lot.

The County paid \$1.5 million for the Gadsden Street lot in February 2003, subsequent to obtaining two independent appraisals, which resulted in an average appraised valued of \$1.575 million in 2002. Its previous sales price was \$1.1 million in January, 1988 (Attachment #2).

In its evaluation of the proposed purchase of the Gadsden Street lot, the County engaged the services of Barnett Fronczak Architects (BFA) to evaluate how the Gadsden Street lot could be utilized to meet the County’s short and long-term parking and office space needs. BFA determined the lot is of adequate size (1.015 acres) and shape to allow for a variety of building and parking options when the need arises including:

Parking Options – “As-is” the County can use the lot as is for surface parking. In the future, the County can build it out as a parking garage, potentially in phases, with or without plans to support future office building development. Approximately 285-400 parking spaces could be accommodated depending upon whether or not a building would also be placed on site.

Building Options – BFA advised there was a great variety of building options, including the phased development over time, with building ranges from 65,000 square feet (SF) with a 30,000 SF future addition; 95,000 SF build out with a future addition; or 132,600 SF under normal development parameters (office space of greater than 120,000 SF increases complexity and cost; however up to 215,000 SF may be accommodated).

Connectivity with the BOA - The expectation is that a pedestrian bridge would eventually connect the Gadsden Street lot with the BOA. Options prepared by BFA in 2002 as part of the evaluation are provided in Attachment #3.

The Board recognized, during its December 10, 2002 meeting when it approved the purchase of the Gadsden Street lot, that it provides great flexibility for the County to meet its long-term needs, in that office space and/or a parking garage can be built on the site; the lot can be connected with the BOA with a pedestrian bridge; and it provides parking for County employees and visitors to the BOA and Courthouse “as-is” with almost no recurring costs.

Current Use of the Lot and Employee Parking: The Gadsden Street lot is currently subdivided with temporary fencing to accommodate the relocated Traffic Court building services:

- The east side of the lot provides approximately 61 spaces for the Courts to meet its needs associated with the relocated Traffic Court building services. This temporary use required the relocation of 28 employees, who were parking in the Gadsden Street lot, to the City’s parking garage at 215 South Calhoun Street at a cost to the County of \$2,475/month or \$30,000/year at the current tax exempt rate of \$88.37/month/space.

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- The west side of the lot provides approximately 52 shuttle spaces for 65 employees (of which 18 drive Property Appraiser vehicles) plus 8 interns. The Property Appraiser relocated parking for its vehicles from the City's lot to the Gadsden Street lot as a budget reduction measure a few years ago. Additionally the west side of the lot provides parking for 8 Downtown Babies' employees, in compliance with its lease terms, and space for County contractors and summer youth employees working in the Courthouse or the BOA. If the Board lost use of the Gadsden Street lot, it would cost approximately \$70,000/year to relocate 65 employees to leased parking in the City's parking garage at current parking rates.

If the County lost use of the Gadsden Street parking lot:

- It would cost \$100,000/year, at current parking rates, to permanently transition 93 employees from the Gadsden Street lot to the City's parking garage (65 employees who park in the Gadsden Street lot now and 28 who were temporarily relocated to the City's garage to accommodate the Traffic Court building services in the Courthouse). This estimate does not include parking for interns or summer youth employees, who are also accommodated in the Gadsden Street lot.
- The County would additionally be required to provide parking for the 8 Downtown Babies' employees under the terms of its lease (at a cost of \$8,484/year).
- The Board can expect the parking rates will increase over time (the rate increased by 5.6% last year, from \$83.72/month/space to \$88.37/month/space).

Even with the use of the Gadsden Street lot, the County pays for parking in the City's parking garage. In FY09, the County processed \$98,097 in payments for parking in the City's parking garage, which included parking for the following (parking counts vary throughout the year): State Attorney (19 employees), Public Defender (1 employee), Elections (4 employees and 1 vehicle), Guardian Ad Litem (5 employees), Court Administration (3 employees), Tax Collector (4 employees), Sheriff (4 employees), Board (4 employees), juror parking (which the County pays under an agreement with the Courts, although it is not required to do so, at a cost that ranges from about \$7,500 - \$8,500/year), and parking for those temporarily transitioned from the Gadsden Street lot. \$50,544 of the \$98,009 FY'09 cost was paid directly by the County. The remaining \$47,553 includes, in large part, employee contributions at the rate of \$30/month; payments through the Sheriff's office and the Supervisor of Elections, paid indirectly by the County through those offices' budgets; and payment in full by Legal Aide for 2 spaces, the Tax Collector for 4 spaces and Court Administration for 3 spaces.

Plans the Board Approved for the Gadsden Street Lot: When Traffic Court building renovations are completed and services transitioned, staff will pursue the plans the Board approved for the Gadsden Street lot during its January 29, 2009 meeting, unless otherwise directed. This includes the development of 20 metered parking spaces for the public, to improve access to services in the BOA and Courthouse, and approximately 98 spaces for employees of the Board and other entities for which it is responsible for providing facilities and who work in the Courthouse or the BOA.

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- Staff will relocate the 28 employees, who were temporarily reassigned to the City's parking garage, to the Gadsden Street lot. This will increase the number of employees parking at the Gadsden Street lot from 65 to 93, and decrease the County's parking expenses by \$30,000/year at the current rates.
- Staff will transition as many additional employees as possible from the City's parking garage to the Gadsden Street lot to further reduce expenses. For example, there are about 27 Clerk employees parking in the City's parking garage that the Clerk has asked to be accommodated in the lot if possible.

On-site Parking will not Meet Demand in the Long-Term, Even with the Gadsden Street Lot and Additional Parking Spaces in the BOA Parking Garage: 126 employees, who work in the BOA and who are employed by the Board or by other entities for which the Board is required to provide facilities, are assigned to park in the BOA, Gadsden Street lot, or the City's parking garage. Additionally, 20 employees are on a waiting list to park in the BOA, who are not otherwise provided parking through the County. This provides a 146-employee demand for BOA parking (126 + 20). The employers of these 146 employees occupy approximately 48,473 rentable SF of space within the BOA. This calculates to a one BOA employee parking space demanded per 332 rentable SF of office space (48,473 SF / 146 spaces).

The BOA has a total of approximately 136,928 rentable SF of space. Using the current parking demand rate of 1:332 for the entire building equates to a projected BOA employee parking demand of 413 spaces when the BOA is fully occupied by the County and entities for which it is responsible for providing space (136,928 SF / 332). The BOA parking garage has 219 parking spaces, 10 of which will be public metered spaces. Therefore, up to 209 spaces would be available to employees: 204 fewer spaces than the projected 413 employee demand.

It is important to note that this projected parking deficit does not address an anticipated increase in demand for public parking. The Interlocal Agreement between the City of Tallahassee, Leon County and the Community Redevelopment Agency (CRA) requires the Agency to work with the County to develop a plan for additional public parking in the District, particularly to address the needs for parking to accommodate those serving on jury duty at the Leon County Courthouse. On January 12, 2010, the Downtown Redevelopment Commission (DRC), an advisory body appointed by the CRA Board to advise the CRA on development proposals and opportunities in the Downtown CRA District, was presented a proposal for the development of a 650 space parking garage at 227 Calhoun Street, with 400 spaces for public use. While the DRC indicated that it supported the objectives of the proposal, it advised the Downtown CRA did not have sufficient funds or borrowing the capacity to finance the project as initially presented. The proposal estimated it would cost \$23,000 per space to develop the garage, and \$125/year/spot to maintain. The DRC directed staff to work with the developer to explore alternatives and recommended that a parking analysis be conducted for the targeted site and the larger downtown area to quantify public parking demand and revenue potential.

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Summary: The County can ill-afford the loss of the Gadsden Street lot or any of its downtown parking resources.

- Even with the use of the Gadsden Street lot, County-owned facilities are not meeting the demand for employee parking. The Gadsden Street lot provides 52 shuttle parking spaces for 65 employees of the Board and entities for which it is required to provide facilities, as well as 8 spaces for interns, 8 spaces for Downtown Babies, parking for summer youth employees and contractors as needed, and 61 spaces to meet the demand for the temporarily relocated Traffic Court building services. In addition, the County is leasing parking in the City's parking garage at the rate of \$88.37/month/space (in FY'09 the County processed \$98,097 in payments for City parking garage services).
- If the County were to donate the Gadsden Street lot to the Riley House/Museum, the County would lose its investment of \$1.5 million plus it would cost more than \$100,000 per year, at current rates, to transition 98+ employees from the Gadsden Street lot to leased parking. After renovations to the Traffic Court building are completed and services transitioned, the Gadsden Street lot will be reconfigured to provide 20 metered spaces for the public and approximately 98 employee parking spaces. The 28 employees, who were temporarily reassigned to the City's parking garage, will be returned to the Gadsden Street lot.

Additionally, the loss of the Gadsden Street lot would eliminate the potential use of the lot to meet future office space and parking needs, as assessed for the County by Barnett Fronczak Architects during the due diligence review process. While the economy has resulted in the loss of positions, that situation will change over time, and the demand for employee parking will increase as the Courts and court-related services grow in the future.

Options:

1. Do not donate or lease the Gadsden Street parking lot to the Riley House/Museum.
2. Continue to coordinate with the Riley House/Museum for its annual fund raiser/new exhibit display, Rock-a-thon, and Blended Lives program.
3. Board Direction.

Recommendation:

Options #1 and #2.

Attachments:

1. Program and Conceptual Design for Riley/Leon County Legacy Park
2. Location Map of the Gadsden Street Lot and Property Appraiser's Data
3. Barnett Fronczak Architects' Conceptual Designs for the Gadsden Street Lot