

Prepared for



May, 2008

DOWNTOWN LAKE WALES MASTER PLAN

Martin & Vargas DESIGN, P.O. Box 452, Winter Park, Florida 32790
www.martinandvargas.com

Final Plan



Acknowledgements

Lake Wales Area Chamber of Commerce CRA Steering Committee

Robin Gibson, Chairman
Gibson & Valenti

Jack P. Brandon, Esq.
Peterson & Myers PA

Clint Horne
Retired Executive

Kathy Manry, Commission
Liaison
City of Lake Wales

Richard Quaid
RQ Holdings, Inc.

Julie Seay
Coldwell Banker Ridge Properties

Bolet Salud
Violeta B. Salud & Associates, Inc.

Bud Strang
6/10 Corporation

Betty Wojcik, Ex-officio
Lake Wales Area Chamber of Commerce

Tony Otte, Ex-officio
City Manager



Prepared for



May, 2008

Final Plan

DOWNTOWN LAKE WALES MASTER PLAN

Martin & Vargas DESIGN, P.O. Box 452, Winter Park, Florida 32790
www.martinandvargas.com



Table of Contents



I. Introduction

Lake Wales in 2008
10 Place Building Strategies



IV. Downtown Discovery

Land Use, Zoning, Streets, Buildings
Parking Supply
Market Street Plaza
Ridge Scenic Highway/Downtown Interface
Orange, Park & Stuart Avenue
Walesbilt Hotel Site



II. History

Short Synopsis
Previous Studies
2005 Assessment
Ridge Scenic Highway Plan



V. The General Plan

Overview
Street Classification
Orange Avenue
Park & Stuart Avenues
Market Street Plaza
Ridge Scenic Highway & Park



III. Area Analysis

Lake Wales in the Region
Downtown in the City
Public People Generating Places



VI. The Walesbilt Hotel Site

Public Square Comparisons
Three Site Alternatives
Preferred Alternative & the Emerging Big Idea
Phasing Strategy
Before & After Visions

VII. Funding & Implementation Strategies

Prepared for



May, 2008

Final Plan

DOWNTOWN LAKE WALES MASTER PLAN

Martin & Vargas DESIGN, P.O. Box 452, Winter Park, Florida 32790
www.martinandvargas.com

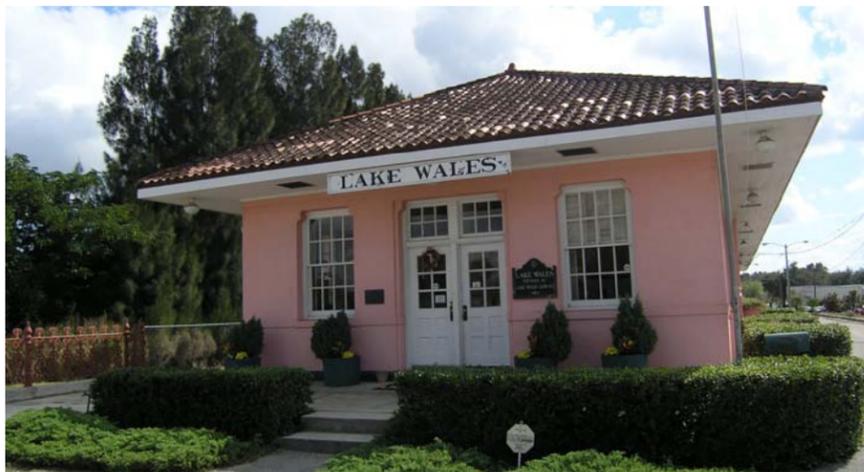


I. Introduction

As we enter the year 2008, we find an American economy that is challenged due to record high oil prices and a flat housing market.

In this slow economy, downtown Lake Wales finds itself with new opportunities and some challenges. Already gifted with many historically significant buildings from Florida's land boom period of the 1920s, downtown Lake Wales has a unique sense of place. These attributes, when coupled with recent redevelopment successes including:

1. the public acquisition of the Dixie-Walesbilt Hotel property,
2. establishment of a Polk Community College campus at old city hall, and
3. additional reinvestment in downtown buildings and properties totaling over \$5 million, bode well for the continuing resurgence of the downtown.



Perhaps the biggest challenge is creating market demand for existing building space. For while downtown Lake Wales is centrally positioned in the city, lack of exposure to large volumes of drive-by traffic (found on US 27 and SR 60) limits its attractiveness to local business, restaurants and retailers. The preferred location for the national chains will be around the Eagle Ridge Mall.

We believe that downtown Lake Wales will need home grown community-based solutions, with a long-term focus on place making and continued public capital re-investment. The Lake Wales Community has demonstrated time and again that it is up to this challenge.

Ten tested Place Building Strategies are presented on this page. These strategies were applied in the development of this plan and should continue to guide the City throughout its implementation.



Energizing downtown Lake Wales

10 Place Building Strategies

Strategy 1: Continue to enhance the conditions for private sector investment.

Strategy 2: Concentrate initial public investment in the highest potential energy locations.

Strategy 3: Complete a parking/building placement plan.

Strategy 4: Lead with vision at key parcel locations.

Strategy 5: Understand the economics and return on investment for public sector projects.

Strategy 6: Invest in "civic" space and activities.

Strategy 7: Implement housing density programs and diversify housing types.

Strategy 8: Strengthen downtown Lake Wales' identity.

Strategy 9: Acquire and, if necessary, publicly develop key parcels.

Strategy 10: Communicate, communicate, communicate!

Prepared for



May, 2008

DOWNTOWN LAKE WALES MASTER PLAN

Martin & Vargas DESIGN, P.O. Box 452, Winter Park, Florida 32790
www.martinandvargas.com

Final Plan

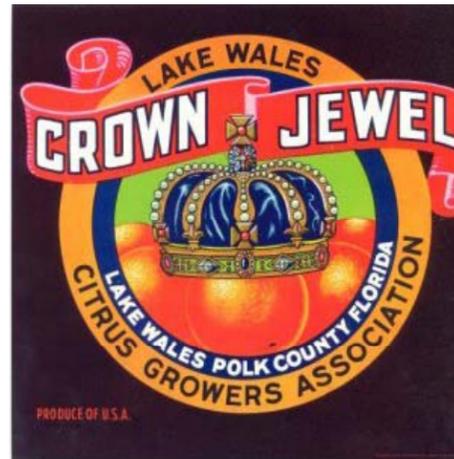
Page 1



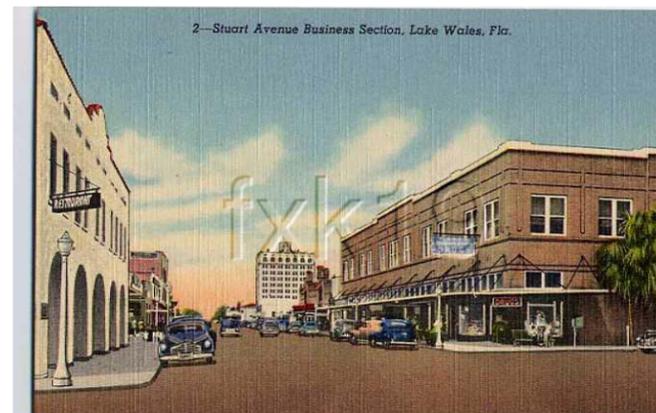
II. History



“Lake Wales was founded in 1911 by the Lake Wales Land Company, a group of businessmen who purchased 5,000 acres in the hilly wilderness around Lake Wailes – a pristine lake named after Sydney Wailes, a land agent employed by the State of Florida after the Civil War. The men of Lake Wales Land Company believed that the plentiful pine forests would form the basis of a thriving turpentine and lumber industry, the sandy soil would be ideal for growing grapefruit, oranges and other citrus, and the rolling hills would be the perfect site for a town. The first settlers arrived in 1911, the town was incorporated in 1917, and the city was granted its municipal charter in 1921.”¹



With a depot near Park Avenue in downtown, Lake Wales was originally serviced by the Atlantic Coast Line Railroad beginning in 1911. In 1928, a new station was built south of downtown to relieve traffic congestion. Scenic Highway (SR 17) was the main north/south road serving early Lake Wales, providing a direct regional road connection to downtown. The 1920s were the boom days for Lake Wales. It was during this decade that most of the downtown buildings were constructed, culminating with the 10-story Dixie-Walesbilt Hotel which opened in 1927. Unfortunately, the hotel never realized its potential as the Florida Land Boom came to a quick end. Shortly thereafter the nation was plunged into Great Depression.



Downtown Lake Wales began to lose its locational advantages in the early 1950s. US 27 was extended from Tallahassee to Miami in 1949 replacing SR 17 as the major north south road. In 1954, passenger rail service ceased. Suburbanization of the city had begun. In 1996, the Eagle Ridge Mall opened northwest of downtown. In 1998, stressed for additional space, city government moved from their downtown location just west on Central Avenue into a vacated and renovated K-mart building. Today downtown Lake Wales finds itself in need of new economic drivers to add fresh purpose to this historical asset.

¹. City of Lake Wales Website

Prepared for



May, 2008

DOWNTOWN LAKE WALES MASTER PLAN

Martin & Vargas DESIGN, P.O. Box 452, Winter Park, Florida 32790
www.martinandvargas.com

Final Plan

Page 2



II. History

Building on Previous Work:

This Plan builds off a the previous body of work completed for downtown Lake Wales including:

2005 Downtown and Lincoln Avenue Assessment Report by Martin & Vargas DESIGN, and

April, 2004 The Ridge Scenic Highway Designation Application by the Ridge Scenic Highway Advocacy Group.

2005 Assessment Report

The 2005 Downtown and Lincoln Avenue Assessment Report involved both technical analyses as well as interviews with may downtown merchants, property owners and interested citizens. Public comments for improvements included the following:

- Create downtown residential alternatives
- Improve the Bank of America building
- Improve green spaces
- Expand outdoor dining
- Create more than Bok Tower as our calling card
- Improve building facades & canopies
- Enhance with plants, add trees, shade and lighting

Prepared for



May, 2008



- Improve the business mix & other uses
- Utilize Crystal Lake
- Provide better directional signage
- Connect Park Avenue merchants west of First Street
- Create better pedestrian environments

The Lake Wales Town Trail

Connect downtown to Bok Sanctuary with a scenic drive winding through the heart of Lake Wales. Improvements would include: streetscape elements, a tree canopy, pedestrian & bicycle amenities, park improvements and a gateway element at Tower Boulevard & Burns Avenue.

Six Big Ideas were advanced in this report:

- | | |
|--|---|
| 1. Concentrate activities in the downtown core | 4. Address the Walesbilt Hotel |
| 2. Create better beginnings (raise the profile at entrance points) | 5. Examine the pedestrian/parking balance |
| 3. Promote residential in the core. | 6. Complete a new physical master plan. |

Connect the Amenities – The Lake Wales Town Trail



DOWNTOWN LAKE WALES MASTER PLAN

Martin & Vargas DESIGN, P.O. Box 452, Winter Park, Florida 32790
www.martinandvargas.com

II. History

Previous Reports

The Ridge Scenic Highway Plan

A Scenic Highway Plan was developed as part of an application to the State of Florida to designate SR 17 as a Florida Scenic Highway. The designation extends the 38.7 mile length of the road in Polk County from Haines City to Frostproof. Elements of the Plan with regards to Lake Wales are as follows:



Initiation of Master Plan in Lake Wales

- Trailhead at SR 17 and trail
- Streetscape/bicycle trail along 3rd Street (within Lake Wales Residential Historic District)
- Passive recreational park with visual connection to commercial historic district and lake, SR 17 and Park Ave.
- Streetscaping along SR 17 (within Lake Wales Downtown Historic Commercial District)

SR 17 and Park Avenue Signature Space

- Redevelop parking on southeast corner
- Special pavement treatment of pedestrian crossing
- Passive urban park on northeast corner
- Landscaping along Park Avenue
- Decorative lighting along Park Avenue



Prepared for



May, 2008

Final Plan

DOWNTOWN LAKE WALES MASTER PLAN

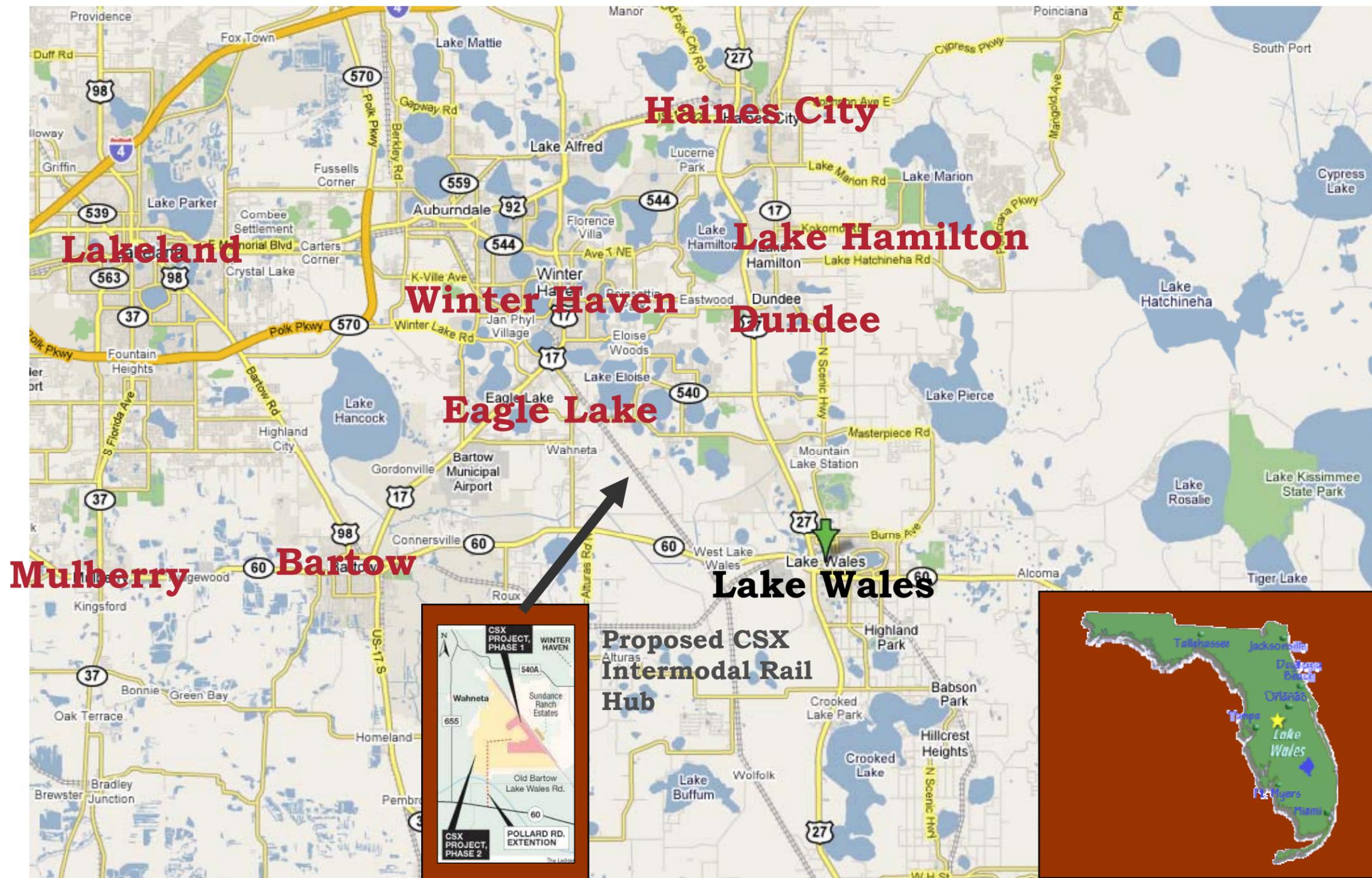
Martin & Vargas DESIGN, P.O. Box 452, Winter Park, Florida 32790
www.martinandvargas.com

Page 4



III. Area Analysis

Lake Wales in the Region



With a 2006 population of 16,273¹ Lake Wales is one of Polk County’s principal cities. Lake Wales is projected to grow to 17,437 by 2011 for an annual growth rate of 1.4%. Per capita income is \$19,208. The median household income is \$31,837. In 2006, the median age was 37.8.²

Lake Wales is well positioned in the geographical center of peninsular Florida. This location is attracting new major investment in the form of CSX’s new state-of-the-art intermodal rail hub slated for south Winter Haven. This facility is predicted to have a major economic impact to the region, initially generating 2,000 new jobs with an average salary & benefit of \$45,000.

The proximity of the project to Lake Wales should produce a very positive economic impact on the City in both direct and indirect employment and wage growth. The city’s own Longleaf Business Park on south US 27 should also benefit from the CSX facility, accelerating its build out.

¹ 3-mile radius from center of downtown Lake Wales

² Source: Progress Energy by Experian/Applied Geographic Solutions

Prepared for



May, 2008

Final Plan

DOWNTOWN LAKE WALES MASTER PLAN

Martin & Vargas DESIGN, P.O. Box 452, Winter Park, Florida 32790
www.martinandvargas.com



III. Area Analysis

Downtown Lake Wales in the City



Downtown Lake Wales is centrally located to many of the city’s economic, tourism and employment centers from Bok Sanctuary and the Lake Wales Medical Center on the east side of the City to the Florida Natural Processing Plant and the Municipal Airport on the west side .

Downtown is host to a core of banking, insurance and legal businesses. It addition, it still contains the Post Office and Charter School Administration Offices. From a retail perspective it provides hardware, jewelry, several restaurants, bars and home grown boutiques.

Economic Growth

Currently, downtown Lake Wales is benefiting significantly from several major investments that will total approximately \$5 million. These include the renovation of the Rhodesbilt Arcade, the Bank of America Building and the Bullard Building which is currently adding second floor offices and residential condominiums. Construction has also begun on the renovation to the old City Hall which will now house a new Polk Community College Campus. One hundred and twenty-five students are projected for the first year with a \$604,000 impact to the economy. That impact is predicted to grow to \$3.3 million when the college is at full capacity.



Prepared for



May, 2008

DOWNTOWN LAKE WALES MASTER PLAN

Martin & Vargas DESIGN, P.O. Box 452, Winter Park, Florida 32790
www.martinandvargas.com

Final Plan

Page 6

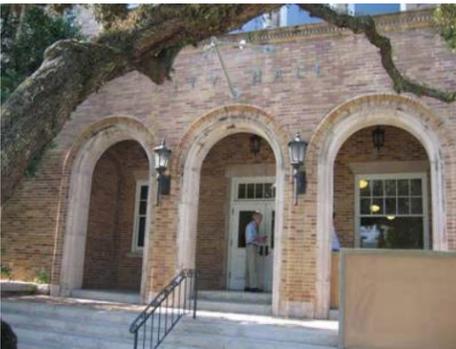


III. Area Analysis

Downtown Lake Wales in the City Public "People Generating" Places



U.S. Post Office



Polk Community College



Lake Wales Area Chamber

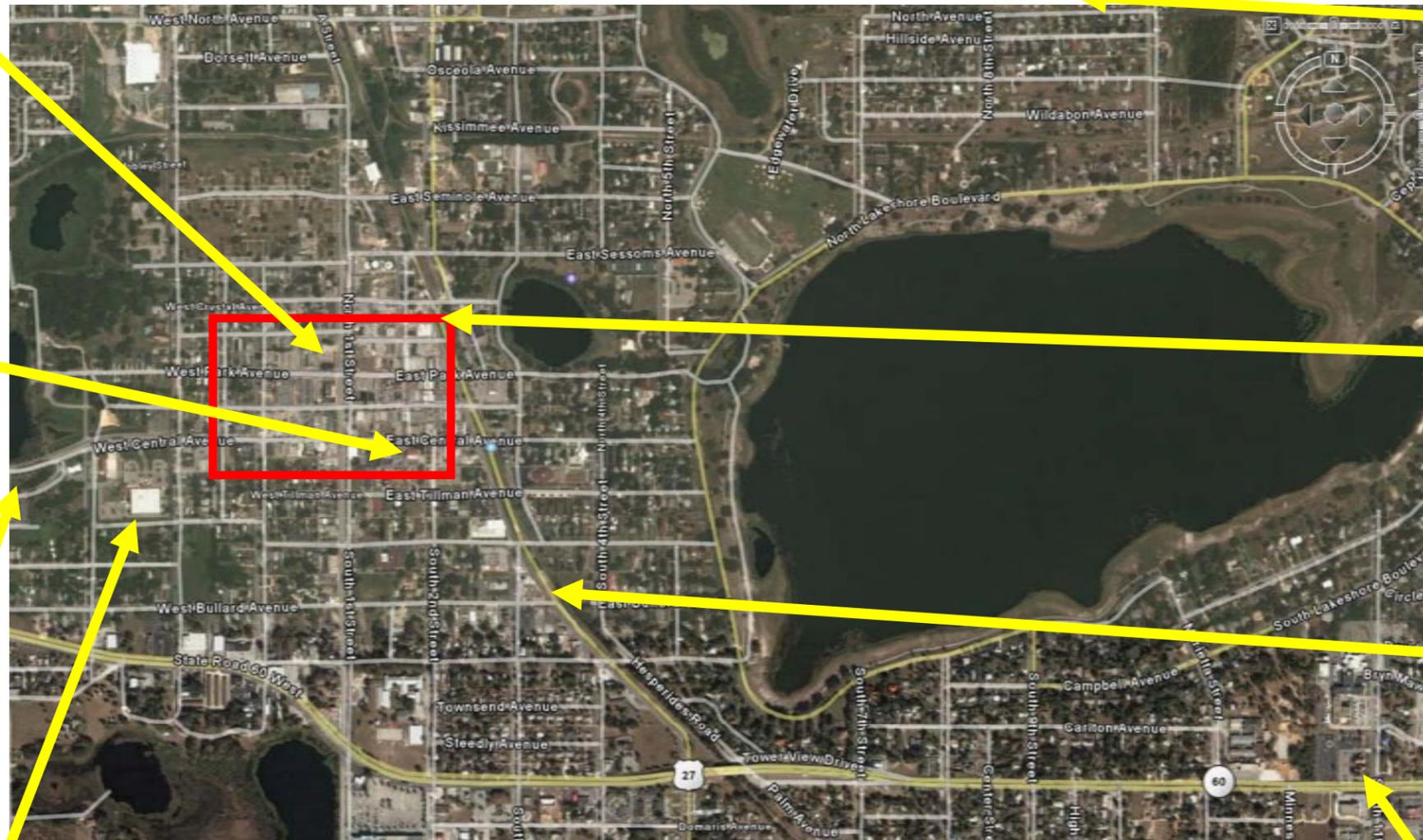


Municipal Administration Building

Prepared for



May, 2008



Lake Wales Family YMCA



Lake Wales Library



Lake Wales Depot Museum



Lake Wales Art Center

Lake Wales has numerous public/semi-public facilities which generate local pedestrian and visitor traffic. Beginning with the relocation of the train depot in 1926 on through to the relocation of city hall in 1998, downtown has lost functions that augment business activity. Recently that trend has stabilized. When the Community created its charter school district, administrative offices were located on Central Avenue downtown. Opening in 2009 will be the new campus of Polk Community College in the restored City Hall building.

DOWNTOWN LAKE WALES MASTER PLAN

Martin & Vargas DESIGN, P.O. Box 452, Winter Park, Florida 32790
www.martinandvargas.com

IV. Downtown Discovery

Detailed Studies

Study Area: The downtown study area encompasses an area bounded by Sessoms Avenue on the north to 3rd street along the east, west Central Avenue to the south and Wetmore Street on the west.

Building Placements: Tight building massing along primary downtown streets creates pedestrian friendly environments. This condition is strongest along the initial block of Park Avenue and Stuart Avenue, though some buildings have been demolished for surface parking lots. Lake Wales has a strong sense of place reinforced by the architectural richness of its downtown buildings.



Study Area



Figure Ground/Building Placements

Prepared for



May, 2008

DOWNTOWN LAKE WALES MASTER PLAN

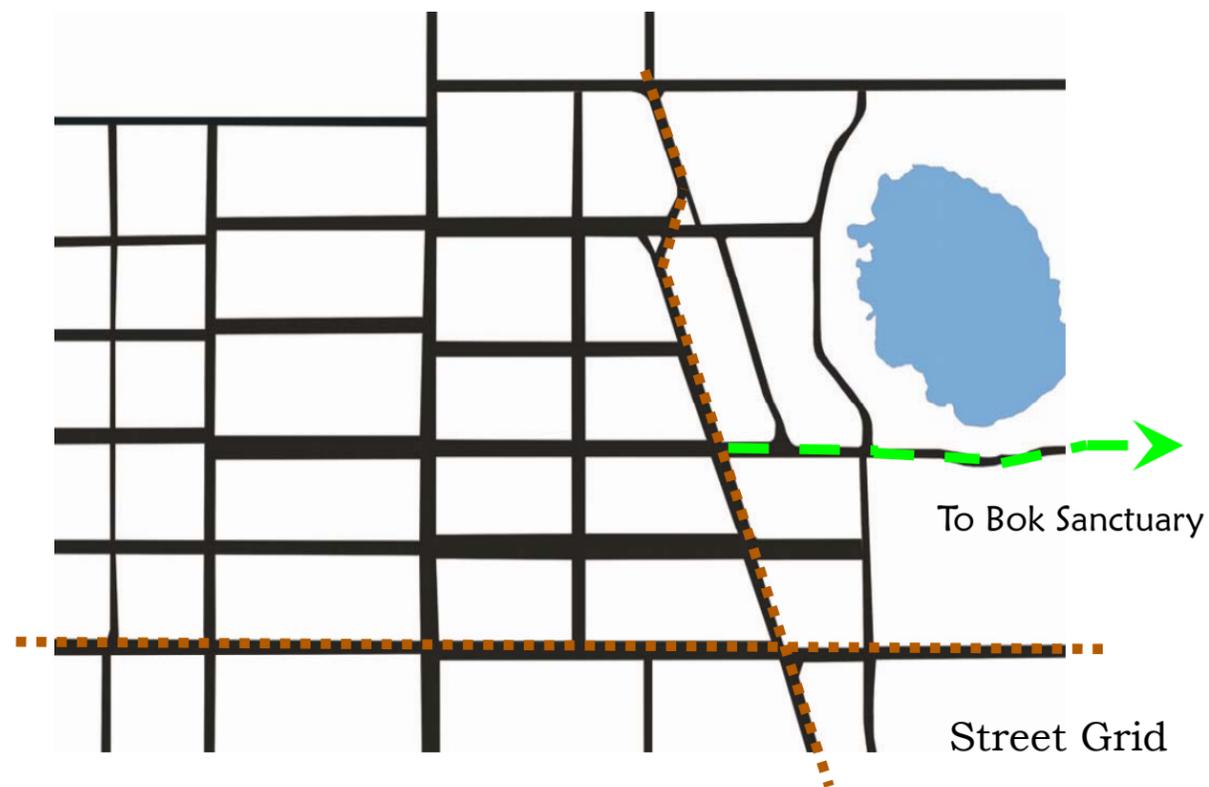
Martin & Vargas DESIGN, P.O. Box 452, Winter Park, Florida 32790
www.martinandvargas.com

Final Plan

Page 8



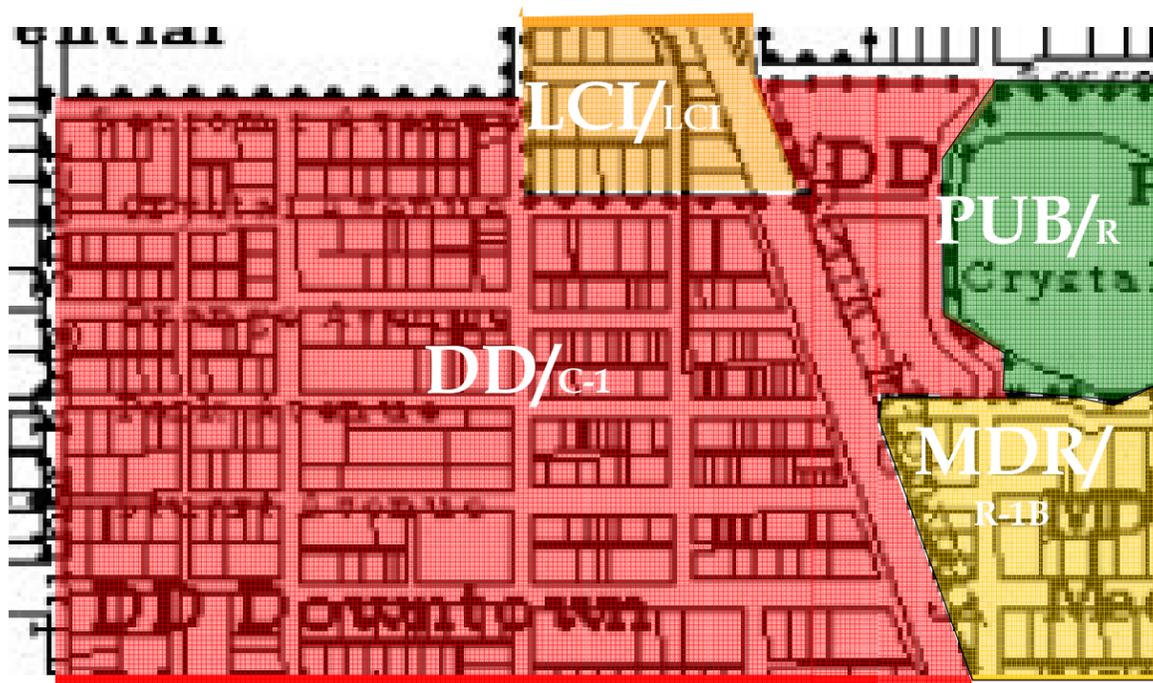
IV. Downtown Discovery



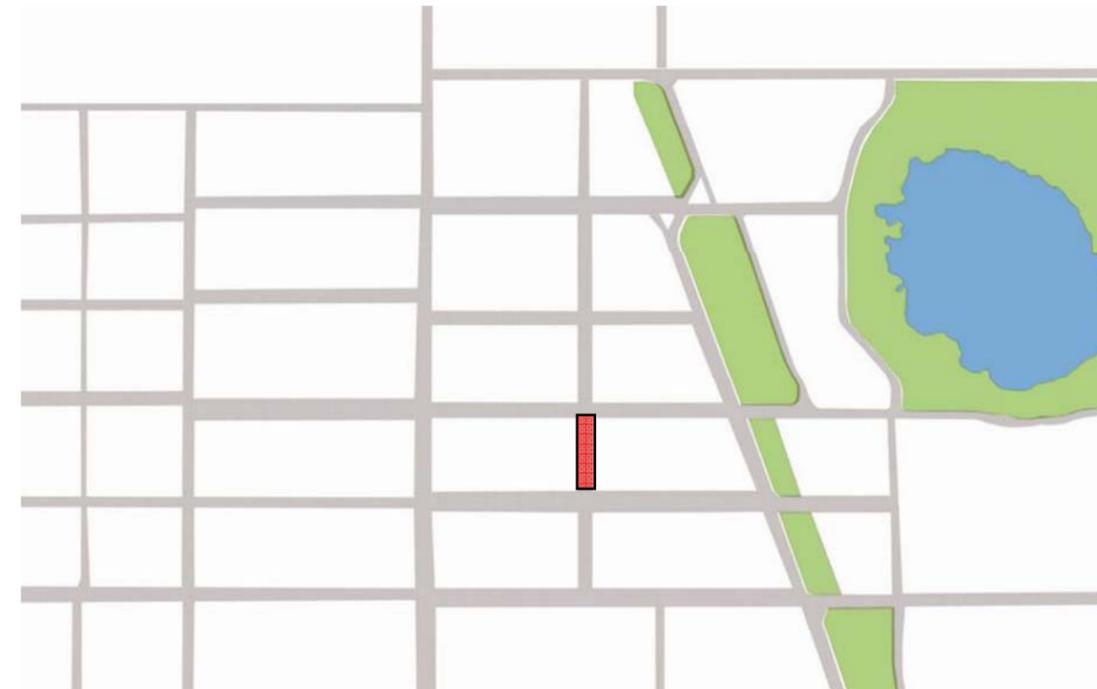
Street Grid: Downtown Lake Wales has a well connected street system allowing for multiple points of connectivity and the ability to establish the urban form necessary for a strong pedestrian environment. Central Avenue and SR17 serve as the main collector roads providing regional access to downtown while Park Avenue east connects to the historic neighborhood, Lake Wailes and serves as an under-promoted connection to Bok Sanctuary.

Future Land Use & Zoning: The study area is predominantly designated “Downtown District” in the City’s Comprehensive Plan Future Land Use and is assigned C-1 zoning. C-1 zoning allows pedestrian-friendly business uses, provides for proper building placement and flexible parking standards appropriate for the creation of a well designed downtown.

Parks & Public Space: One missing element in the original design for downtown Lake Wales was an appropriate public space for community gatherings. This desire was the thought behind the creation of Market Street Plaza during the 1980s. Today the City continues to evaluate how better address this public need in downtown.



Future Land Use and Zoning



Parks & Public Space

DOWNTOWN LAKE WALES MASTER PLAN

Martin & Vargas DESIGN, P.O. Box 452, Winter Park, Florida 32790
www.martinandvargas.com

Prepared for



May, 2008

Final Plan



IV. Downtown Discovery

Downtown Parking Supply

In every town, available parking is a perceived problem. Lake Wales is no exception. This general inventory of parking shows over 1,000 parking spaces spread throughout the downtown core including both on-street parking and surface parking lots.

At a typical parking standard of 4 spaces per 1,000 square feet of building, existing downtown parking will support 274,500 square feet of occupied building space. Given the observed level of economic activity and level of vacancy in downtown we believe at this time that additional parking is not one of the City's most immediate needs.



Parking Areas

Parking Facts	
Off-street Parking	997 Spaces
Off-street City Parking	82 Spaces
On street Parking	141 Spaces
Total	1,098 Spaces

Avenue	Undefined parking lots	Total parking spaces	Defined parking lots	Total parking spaces	On street parking	Total parking spaces	Total lots	Total parking spaces
Crystal Av.	3	90	0	0	0	0	3	90
Orange Av.	4	111	1	16	0	6	5	133
Park Av.	5	164	4	86	0	83	9	333
Stuart Av.	4	70	3	97	0	52	7	219
Central Av.	4	54	4	98	0	0	8	152
Cypress Garden Lane	0	0	1	58	0	0	1	58
Scenic Highway	0	0	1	113	0	0	1	113
Total	20	489	14	468	0	141	34	1,098

Prepared for



May, 2008

DOWNTOWN LAKE WALES MASTER PLAN

Martin & Vargas DESIGN, P.O. Box 452, Winter Park, Florida 32790
www.martinandvargas.com

Final Plan



IV. Downtown Discovery

Market Place



Is Market Place adequate as a central civic space for the City?

Market Place was created to give the City a downtown civic space. Market Street was closed between E. Stuart and E. Park Avenues and decorative pavers, flower gardens and pedestrian amenities were added transforming the area into a gathering point for downtown activities. The focal point is the Clock Tower which anchors the plaza at East Park Avenue. At approximately 50' X 100' the space is small for its community purpose. Another less than ideal aspect is the deadening of the space by the blank side walls of the adjacent buildings. The one positive relief is the Arcade Coffee & Sandwich Shoppe with its outdoor seating on the plaza.

Prepared for



May, 2008

DOWNTOWN LAKE WALES MASTER PLAN

Martin & Vargas DESIGN, P.O. Box 452, Winter Park, Florida 32790
www.martinandvargas.com

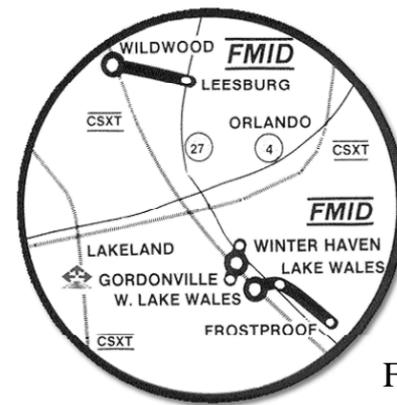
Final Plan

Page 11



IV. Downtown Discovery

Ridge Scenic Highway/Downtown Interface



Highlighted areas shows CSX Right-of-Way

Florida Midland Railroad Routes

The linear edge along the Scenic Highway from Crystal Avenue to Park Avenue offers a wonderful place making opportunity for City. As the original front door to downtown, this area has all of the basic components which make for great space, including park/public land, a through street with modest traffic volumes and a historic building edge.

Though a great opportunity is present, this analysis of existing conditions suggests that any transformation may be cumbersome but not impossible to achieve. On the positive side is the designation of SR17 as a Florida Scenic Highway. This designation paves the way for some creative treatments of the roadway and right-of-way.

More challenging is the realization that the greenway between the road and the library is owned by CSX. However, because the active rail line operated by Florida Midland Railroad serves only one customer in Frostproof, a willingness from the railroad companies to allow green space enhancement may be possible.



Prepared for



May, 2008

Final Plan

DOWNTOWN LAKE WALES MASTER PLAN

Martin & Vargas DESIGN, P.O. Box 452, Winter Park, Florida 32790
www.martinandvargas.com



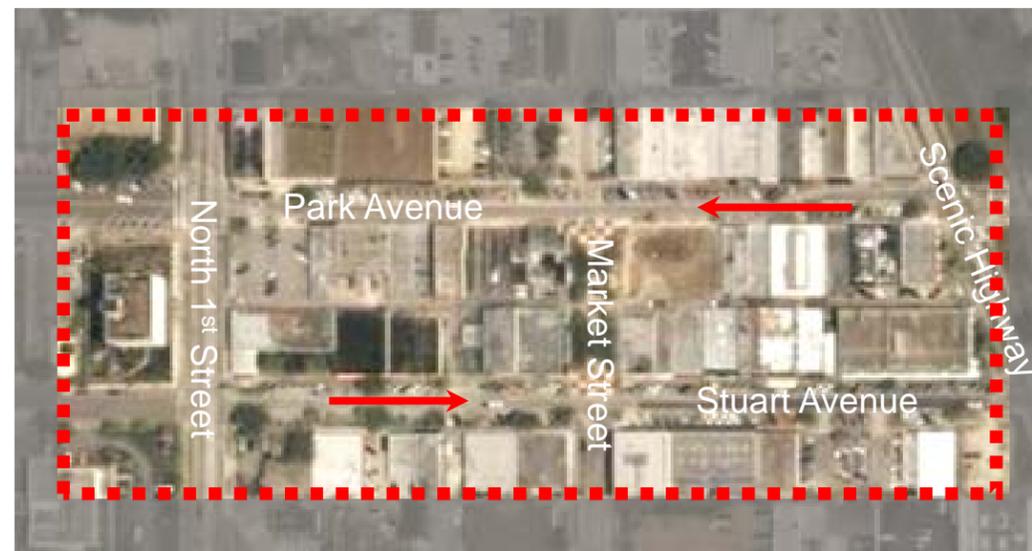
IV. Downtown Discovery



Park, Stuart & Orange Avenues

Park & Stuart Avenues: Park and Stuart Avenues are the historic main streets in downtown Lake Wales. Both have been designated as one-way streets, providing for additional diagonal parking spaces within the area. Other than updating and refreshing of the landscape and amenities along these streets nothing else is recommended to be done at this juncture in the life of downtown Lake Wales.

Orange Avenue: Up until now Orange Avenue has not received the same level of attention as have Park and Stuart Avenues. This street is still designated for two-way traffic and buildings are interspersed with many surface parking lots fronting the street. The buildings are typically one-story masonry block structures lacking the same historic character as those found on Park and Stuart Avenues. These conditions actually open the opportunity for significant transformation and rebirth of this street. The city's challenge is to lead this transformation when it is determined that market conditions are favorable.



Prepared for



May, 2008

DOWNTOWN LAKE WALES MASTER PLAN

Martin & Vargas DESIGN, P.O. Box 452, Winter Park, Florida 32790
www.martinandvargas.com

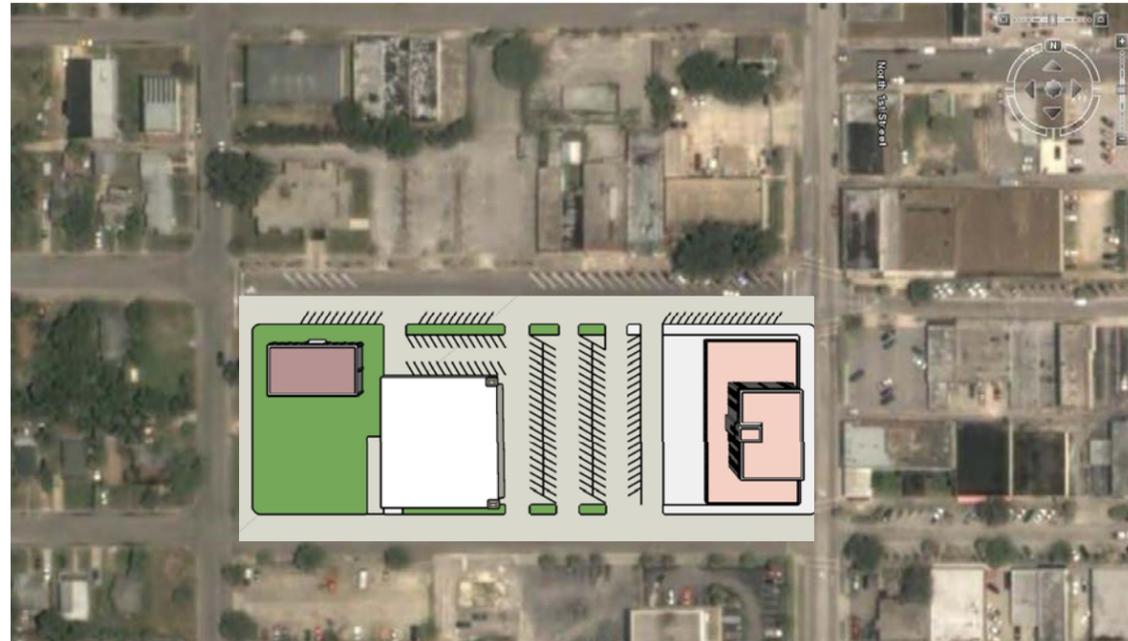
Final Plan



IV. Downtown Discovery

Walesbilt Hotel Site

Existing Conditions



With the acquisition of the Walesbilt hotel site in 2007, the City took a major step forward in resolving a long standing issue in regarding the future of this building and progress for its historic downtown. Currently the City is soliciting private sector proposals for reuse and restoration of the building.



Prepared for



May, 2008

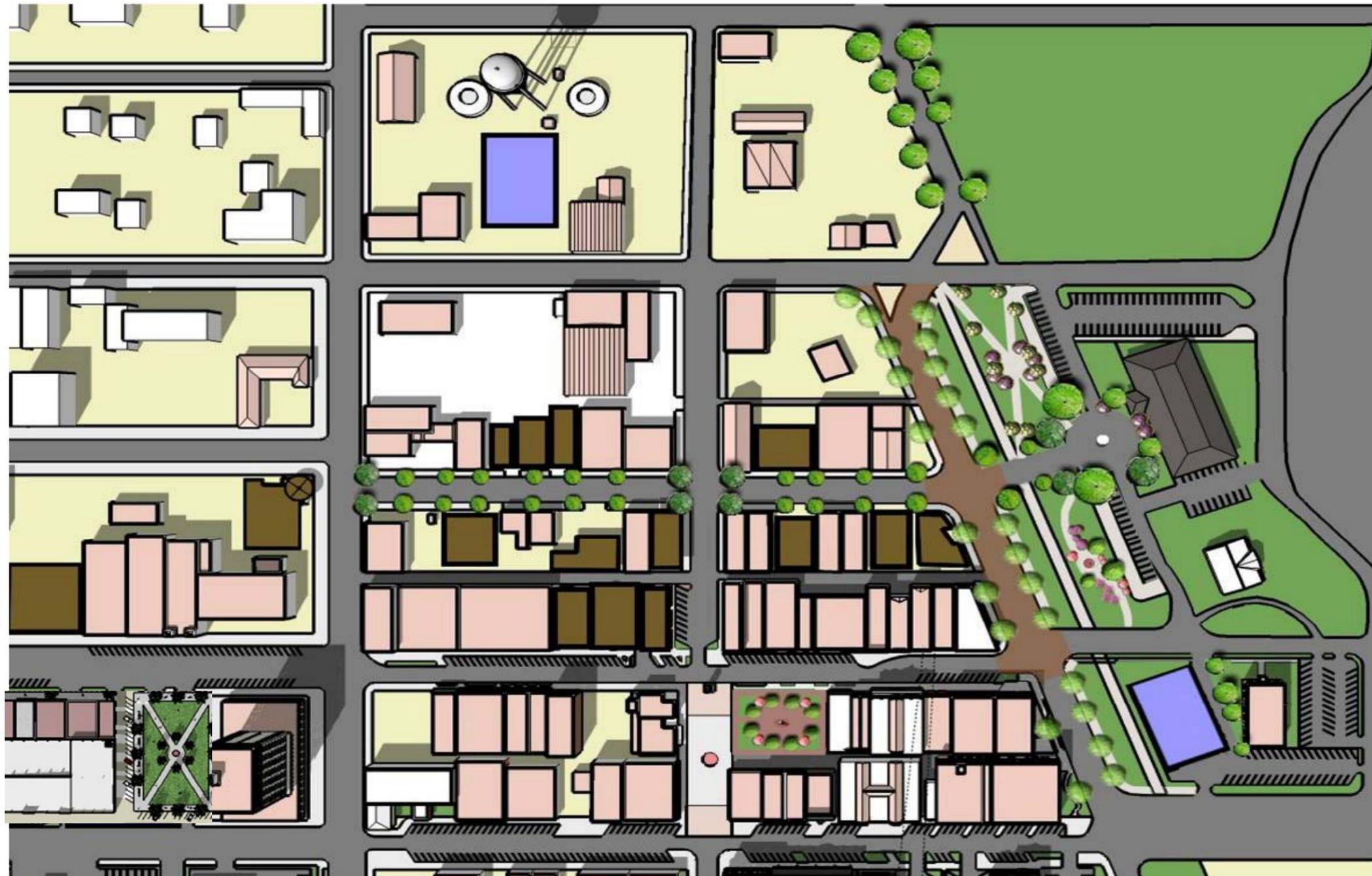
DOWNTOWN LAKE WALES MASTER PLAN

Martin & Vargas DESIGN, P.O. Box 452, Winter Park, Florida 32790
www.martinandvargas.com

Final Plan

Page 14





The Purpose of the Vision:

While it is hard to imagine a complete build-out for downtown Lake Wales given current market realities, without a comprehensive community game plan, it will be difficult to mobilize all of the various players (public and private) to pull in the same direction.

The challenge is to lay out a vision with a multiple-step game plan that has both a realistic chance of success and the capacity to absorb unexpected developments from other players in the game of downtown redevelopment.

Based on a consensus of the CRA committee, this plan's primary focus evolved towards an in depth analysis and solution for the Walesbilt Hotel site. It also defines a street classification system for downtown and also presents realistic mid-range visions for the Ridge Scenic Highway section in downtown Lake Wales, opportunities for enhancing downtown public spaces and a vision for Orange Avenue.

Prepared for



May, 2008

DOWNTOWN LAKE WALES MASTER PLAN

Martin & Vargas DESIGN, P.O. Box 452, Winter Park, Florida 32790
www.martinandvargas.com

Final Plan

Page 15



V. The General Plan

Proposed Street Classification

Main Entry

- Facilitates Vehicular Movement
- Higher speed

Type 'A' existing

- Continuous Retail/ Building Facades
- One-way with Diagonal Parking
- High Level of Pedestrian-friendly Design

Type 'A' proposed

- Continuous Building Facades
- Two-way with Parallel Parking
- Highest Level of Pedestrian-friendly Design

Type 'B' proposed

- Interrupted Building Facades
- Access to Parking Lots & Structures
- Moderate Level of Pedestrian friendly Design

Scenic Highway -- Unique

- Calls for Special Treatment
- Constrained Right-of-Way

The proposed street classification system for downtown Lake Wales prioritizes the streets in terms of pedestrian quality. Because the elements which make a street pedestrian friendly are significantly less accommodating for automobiles from a traffic and parking perspective, a downtown needs to balance its designated 'best' pedestrian streets with more accommodating vehicular streets. This plan recognizes that both Park and Stuart Avenues are an existing one-way pair with diagonal parking. For the duration of this plan horizon (10 years), no changes are recommended. In the future, the City may want to consider returning these streets to a two-way traffic pattern with parallel parking. Such a condition would provide wider sidewalks for an improved pedestrian experience. It is possible to demonstrate the ideal Type "A" streetscape condition on either Orange Avenue and/or Park Avenue west of 1st street.



Prepared for



May, 2008

DOWNTOWN LAKE WALES MASTER PLAN

Martin & Vargas DESIGN, P.O. Box 452, Winter Park, Florida 32790
www.martinandvargas.com

Final Plan

Page 16



V. The General Plan

Orange Avenue



Terminated Vista

Orange Avenue is a two-way connector from First Street directly to the existing library. As downtown Lake Wales continues to develop, Orange Avenue can evolve into a tree-lined pedestrian street with parallel parking on both sides. Opportunities for dramatic private sector redevelopment of existing properties are bountiful. A signature building terminating the Orange Avenue view at First Street can make a dramatic visual statement. The City may want to consider acquisition of this property to ensure its proper redevelopment. New forms of mixed-use development with upper floor residential would be appropriate for this street. Market timing, strategic public investment, well conceived incentives and design regulations should be evaluated.



Orange Ave Plan View



Orange Ave Section View



Prepared for



May, 2008

DOWNTOWN LAKE WALES MASTER PLAN

Martin & Vargas DESIGN, P.O. Box 452, Winter Park, Florida 32790
www.martinandvargas.com

Final Plan



V. The General Plan

Evolving Civic Spaces



Three civic spaces are designated in this plan. An expanded Market Place is augmented by a new civic green as part of the Walesbilt Hotel redevelopment. Creation of a park in the open area between the Ridge Scenic Highway and the Library is also specified as was suggested in the Ridge Scenic Highway Plan.

These Civic Spaces are discussed in more detail on subsequent pages.

Prepared for



May, 2008

DOWNTOWN LAKE WALES MASTER PLAN

Martin & Vargas DESIGN, P.O. Box 452, Winter Park, Florida 32790
www.martinandvargas.com

Final Plan

Page 18



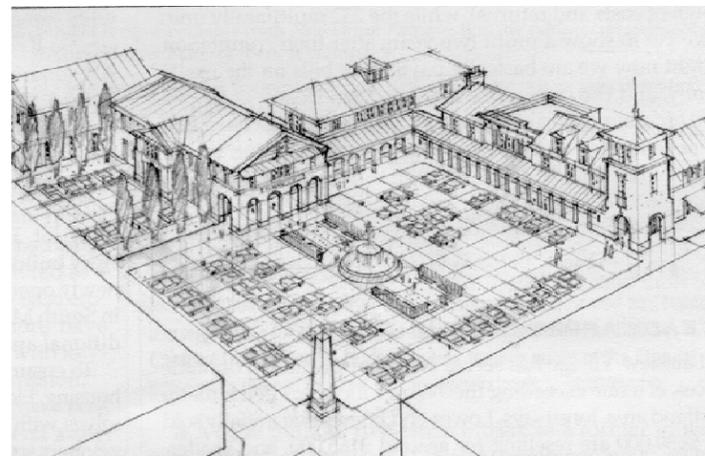
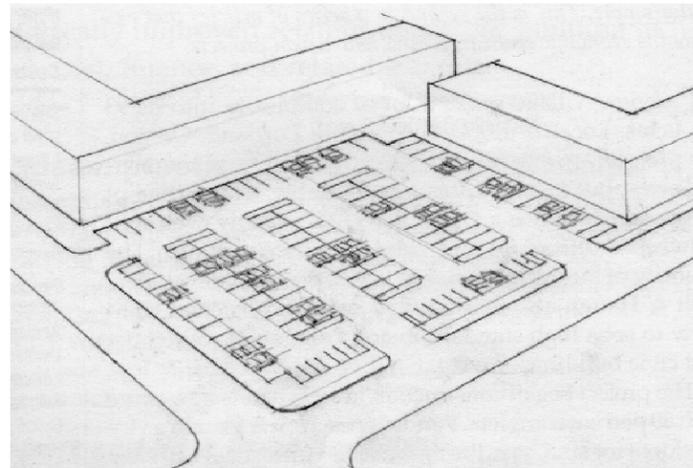
V. The General Plan

Market Place



What happens to the Market Place is somewhat dependent upon when and how the other two recommended civic/park spaces develop. Obviously, no changes need to occur to this space in the short-term. If the civic space attached to the Walesbilt is developed and becomes more mature and important for civic functions, the City may determine that Market Place is no longer needed and decide to reopen it as a street.

The community may also prefer to have multiple downtown public spaces and thus retain Market Place. This space can be improved and expanded for event functions through the redesign of the adjacent parking lot into a parking piazza. In this way during typical daily activity it functions as it does today – a parking lot. However for civic events that space is suitably designed to make a very comfortable and pedestrian- friendly space. The concept is based on the civic squares found across Europe.



The Parking Piazza -- Civilizing the Parking Lot

Prepared for



May, 2008

DOWNTOWN LAKE WALES MASTER PLAN

Martin & Vargas DESIGN, P.O. Box 452, Winter Park, Florida 32790
www.martinandvargas.com

Final Plan

Page 19



V. The General Plan

Ridge Scenic Highway and Park Concept Imagery



Prepared for



May, 2008

DOWNTOWN LAKE WALES MASTER PLAN

Martin & Vargas DESIGN, P.O. Box 452, Winter Park, Florida 32790
www.martinandvargas.com

Final Plan

Page 20



V. The General Plan

Design Intent:

To civilize the street by introducing on street parking on both sides of the street, accentuating pedestrian crosswalks and reinforcing the street tree canopy. The introduction of sidewalks on the park side that are 25-30 feet wide would allow for urban amenities to be used and enjoyed by pedestrians. A well-defined green space becomes a village green to be used and enjoyed by the community. It also serves as a natural transition between the commercial and the single-family residential areas to the east.

Implementation:

There are three major components to this plan. 1) improvements to the road segment itself (from Crystal Avenue to Park Avenue) 2) park development in coordination with CSX and Florida Midland Railroad and 3) private property improvements along the western face of the Scenic Highway.

Based on this initial concept comes a design development phase would specify actual physical improvements based on an existing conditions survey. Support and participation by the Scenic Highway Corridor Management Entity and adjacent property owners is essential.

The park components can occur initially with an agreement with CSX and Florida Midland Railroad. If the rail corridor is eventually abandoned, city acquisition should become a priority.



VI. The Walesbilt Hotel Site

Public Square Comparisons

To establish a feel for sizes of successful town squares we examined several existing spaces that may be familiar to Lake Wales residents. Sizes vary significantly, but perhaps a minimum standard of at least 100 feet in width by 150 feet in length is needed to create a comfortable civic space.



Lakeland's Munn Park
265'(w) X 290'(h)



New Orleans's Jackson Square
335'(w) X 355'(h)



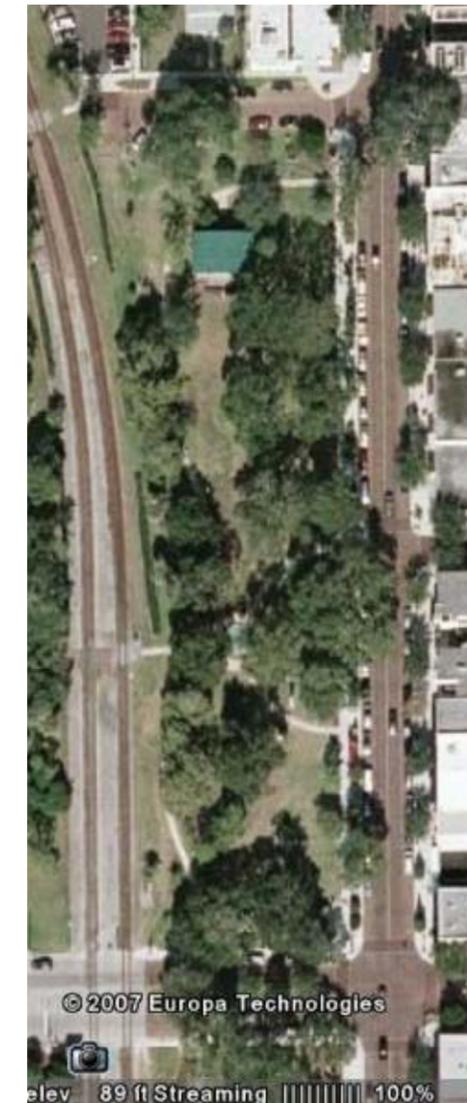
Winter Haven's Central Park
175'(w) X 290'(h)



Savannah's Madison Square
238'(w) X 236'(h)



Winter Park's Central Park S.
137'(w) X 612'(h)



Winter Park's Central Park N.
137'(w) X 592'(h)

Prepared for



May, 2008

DOWNTOWN LAKE WALES MASTER PLAN

Martin & Vargas DESIGN, P.O. Box 452, Winter Park, Florida 32790
www.martinandvargas.com

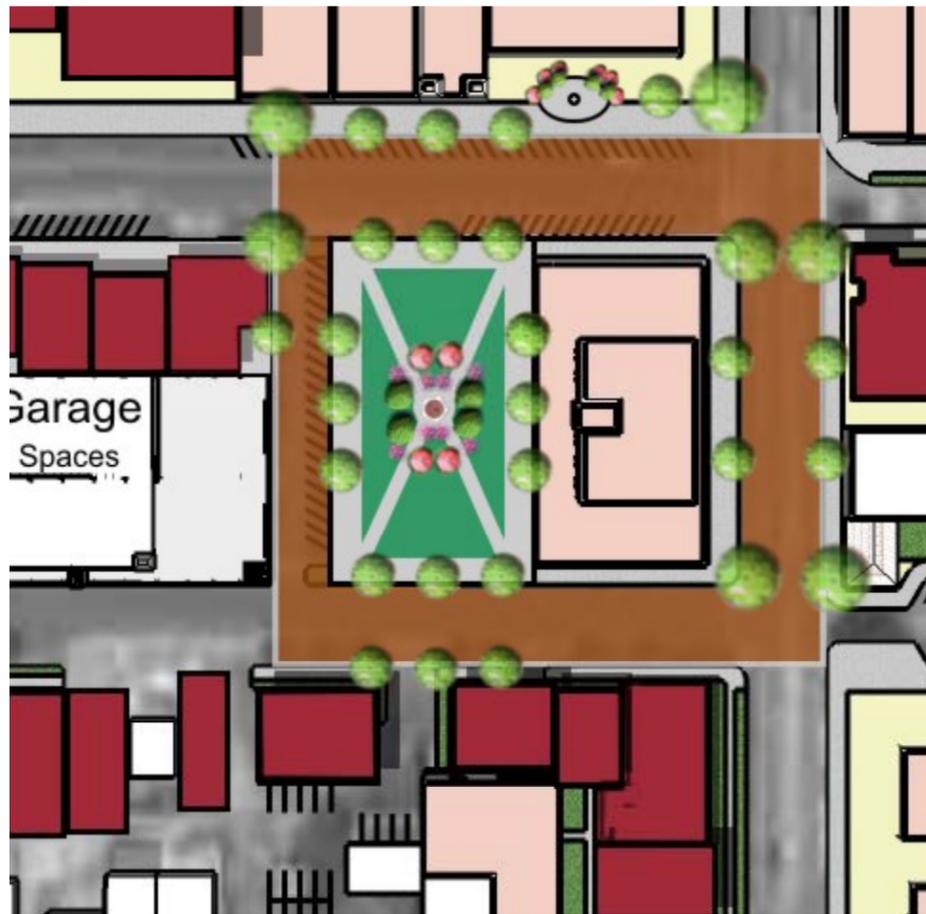
Final Plan

Page 22



VI. The Walesbilt Hotel Site

Alternative Concepts



Renovated Hotel with Public Square directly west of the Building:

Pros: This alternative maintains the historic hotel building on the site. The proposed green space adds an amenity to the location that increases the economic value of the property.

Cons: The size of the proposed new square is 100' X 200' which is less than ideal but is twice as large as Market Street Plaza. It falls within a size range that is comparable to other town greens in the area and provides synergy with ground floor building activities.

The majority of the parking for the building would be located approximately one-half block from the building.



Prepared for



May, 2008

DOWNTOWN LAKE WALES MASTER PLAN

Martin & Vargas DESIGN, P.O. Box 452, Winter Park, Florida 32790
www.martinandvargas.com

Final Plan

Page 23



VI. The Walesbilt Hotel Site

Alternative Concepts



Demolished Hotel & Creation of a Large Public Square:

Pros: Creates a sufficiently large public plaza (200' x 200') to accommodate the city's major civic events.

Cons: Requires a large public investment to demolish the historic hotel in order to create the large public plaza. By itself, the enlarged public plaza may be insufficient to generate new private sector investment surrounding the improvement.



Prepared for



May, 2008

DOWNTOWN LAKE WALES MASTER PLAN

Martin & Vargas DESIGN, P.O. Box 452, Winter Park, Florida 32790
www.martinandvargas.com

Final Plan

Page 24



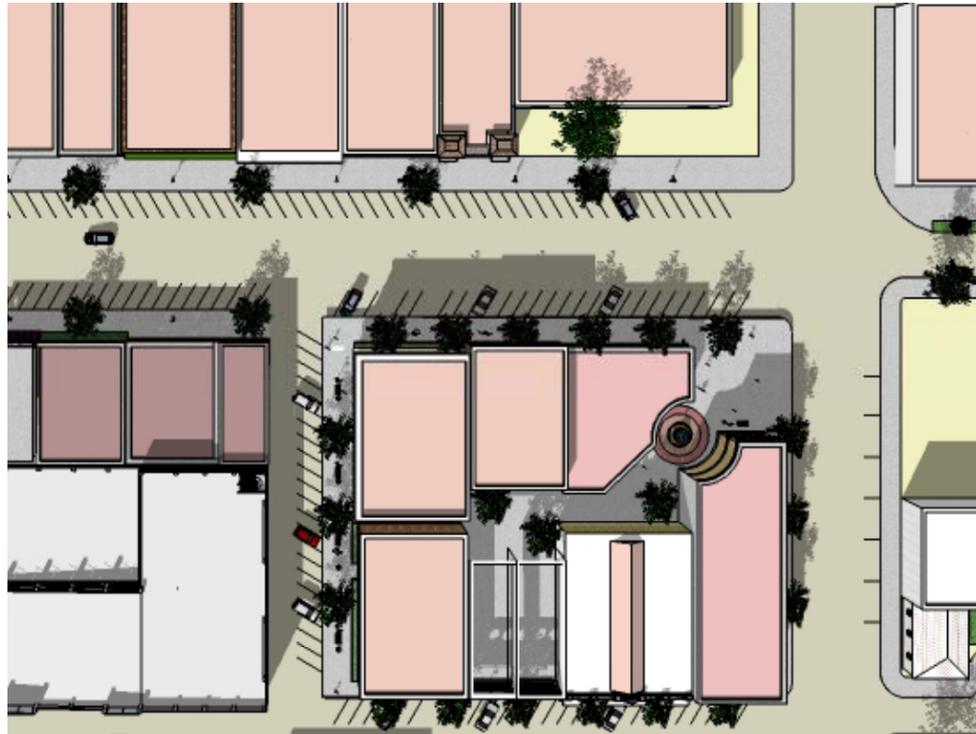
VI. The Walesbilt Hotel Site

Alternative Concepts

Demolish the Hotel & Provide for the Private Sector Redevelopment of the Site:

Pros: Demolition of the hotel clears the site for new development more appropriate for the time and accommodating to new uses.

Cons: The historic resource is lost to the community. There may not be sufficient demand to justify private sector redevelopment of a vacant site at this location at this time. If new product is built it could displace demand from existing buildings located in downtown.



Prepared for



May, 2008

DOWNTOWN LAKE WALES MASTER PLAN

Martin & Vargas DESIGN, P.O. Box 452, Winter Park, Florida 32790
www.martinandvargas.com

Final Plan

Page 25



VI. The Walesbilt Hotel Site

Preferred Alternative



The Emerging Big Idea

Upon review of the presented alternative concepts the CRA Steering Committee unanimously favored the first alternative as follows:

Create a Lake Wales City Center by providing sufficient CRA incentives to enable a private developer to profitably and appropriately restore the entire exterior of the Walesbilt Hotel and make the interior available for adaptive use. The incentives could include:

Providing tenants or condominium purchasers for the ground floor and mezzanine levels to potentially house: 1) the relocation of the Lake Wales Library, 2) Community Rooms, and 3) expansion of Polk Community College.

CRA creation of a new Civic Green directly west of the hotel building (approximate size 100' x 200') to double as a hotel building amenity.

CRA to provide land (and perhaps structure) for Walesbilt parking across from the Civic Green.

The upper floors could be banked by the developer for incremental sale and build-out. The traffic created by CRA investment would be designed to create a market for the successful leasing of the upper floors.

Prepared for



May, 2008

DOWNTOWN LAKE WALES MASTER PLAN

Martin & Vargas DESIGN, P.O. Box 452, Winter Park, Florida 32790
www.martinandvargas.com

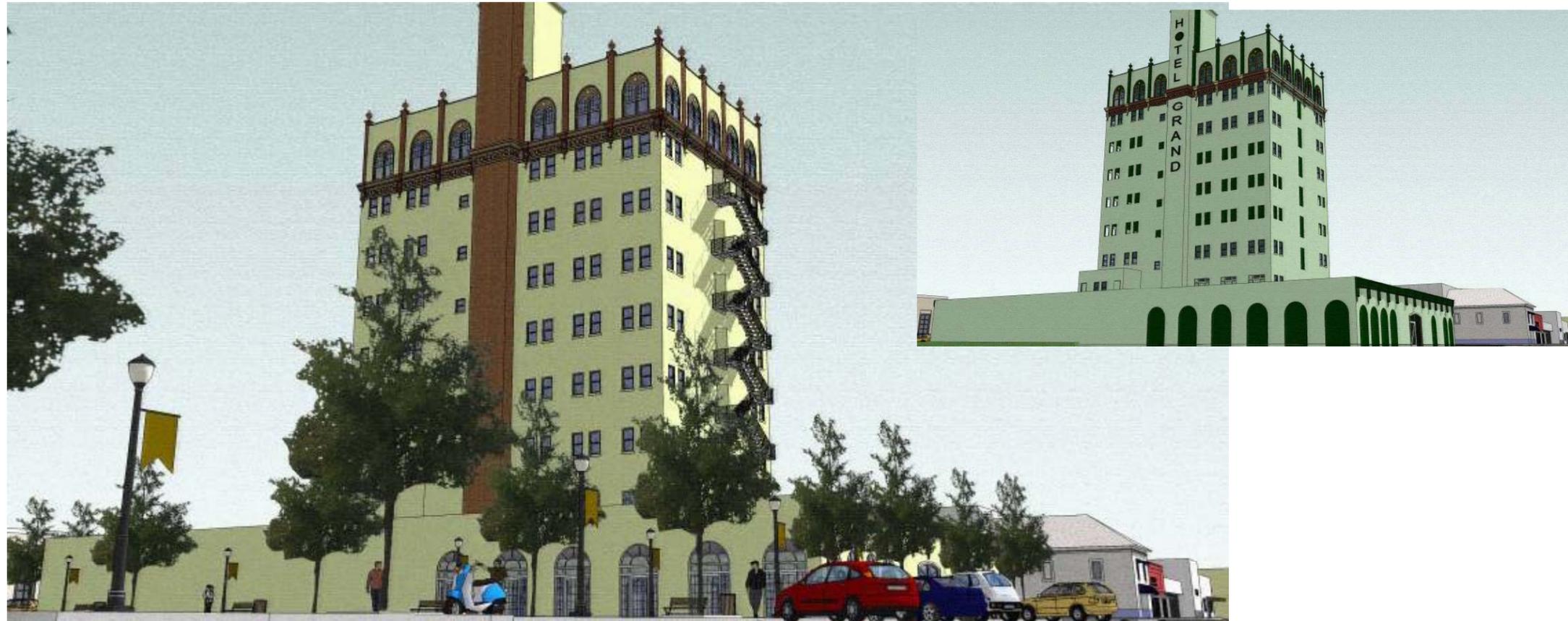
Final Plan

Page 26



VI. The Walesbilt Hotel Site

Preferred Alternative



Prepared for



May, 2008

DOWNTOWN LAKE WALES MASTER PLAN

Martin & Vargas DESIGN, P.O. Box 452, Winter Park, Florida 32790
www.martinandvargas.com

Final Plan

Page 27



VI. The Walesbilt Hotel Site

Phasing Strategy



Existing Conditions

First Floor: 17,177 sq. ft.

2nd – 9th floors: 3,703 sq. ft. each

Total sq. ft. 50,505 sq. ft.



Phase 1 – Exterior Façade & First Two Floors Renovated

First Floor:

Public Library -- 11,477 sq. ft.

Civic Center -- 3,700 sq. ft.

Catering Kitchen -- 2,000 sq. ft.

Second Floor:

Public Library -- 3,703 sq. ft.

Third Floor:

Library Offices -- 3,703 sq. ft.

4th – 9th floors:

Future rental space --

(brought to shell building condition)

Prepared for



May, 2008

DOWNTOWN LAKE WALES MASTER PLAN

Martin & Vargas DESIGN, P.O. Box 452, Winter Park, Florida 32790
www.martinandvargas.com

Final Plan

Page 28



VI. The Walesbilt Hotel Site

Phasing Strategy



Phase 2: Parking Field Added

1. Grand Plaza Group Property Acquired
2. Surface Parking Lot Constructed – 200 new spaces



Phase 3 – Civic Square Built

1. Civic Square Designed through a community design charrette
2. Civic Square Constructed
3. Park Avenue Streetscape Completed

Prepared for



May, 2008

Final Plan

DOWNTOWN LAKE WALES MASTER PLAN

Martin & Vargas DESIGN, P.O. Box 452, Winter Park, Florida 32790
www.martinandvargas.com

Page 29



VI. The Walesbilt Hotel Site

Phasing Strategy



Phase 4 Park Avenue Infill, North Side

Private Investment Expands,
The north side of Park Avenue develops.

Phase 5 Park Avenue Infill, South Side

Private Sector Investment continues and the
South Side of Park Avenue develops.

Estimated new Park Avenue square footage 89,941

Prepared for



May, 2008

DOWNTOWN LAKE WALES MASTER PLAN

Martin & Vargas DESIGN, P.O. Box 452, Winter Park, Florida 32790
www.martinandvargas.com

Final Plan

Page 30



VI. The Walesbilt Hotel Site

Phasing Strategy



Phase 6 – Parking Structure Added

Phase 7 – Stuart Avenue Infill

Market Demand requires construction of the parking structure. 434 spaces designed

Estimated new Stuart Avenue square footage 90,549

Prepared for



May, 2008

Final Plan

DOWNTOWN LAKE WALES MASTER PLAN

Martin & Vargas DESIGN, P.O. Box 452, Winter Park, Florida 32790
www.martinandvargas.com

Page 31



VI. The Walesbilt Hotel Site

Phasing Strategy



Complete Vision

Next Steps:

In order to test the feasibility of the idea, the following additional work would need to be completed:

Lake Wales Library Needs Assessment

Civic Center Needs Assessment

First Phase Building Renovation Evaluation and Cost Estimate

Conceptual Reuse Space Plan for the Walesbilt

Public/Private Financing Strategy Alternatives

Community Charrette for design of the Civic Green

Prepared for



May, 2008

DOWNTOWN LAKE WALES MASTER PLAN

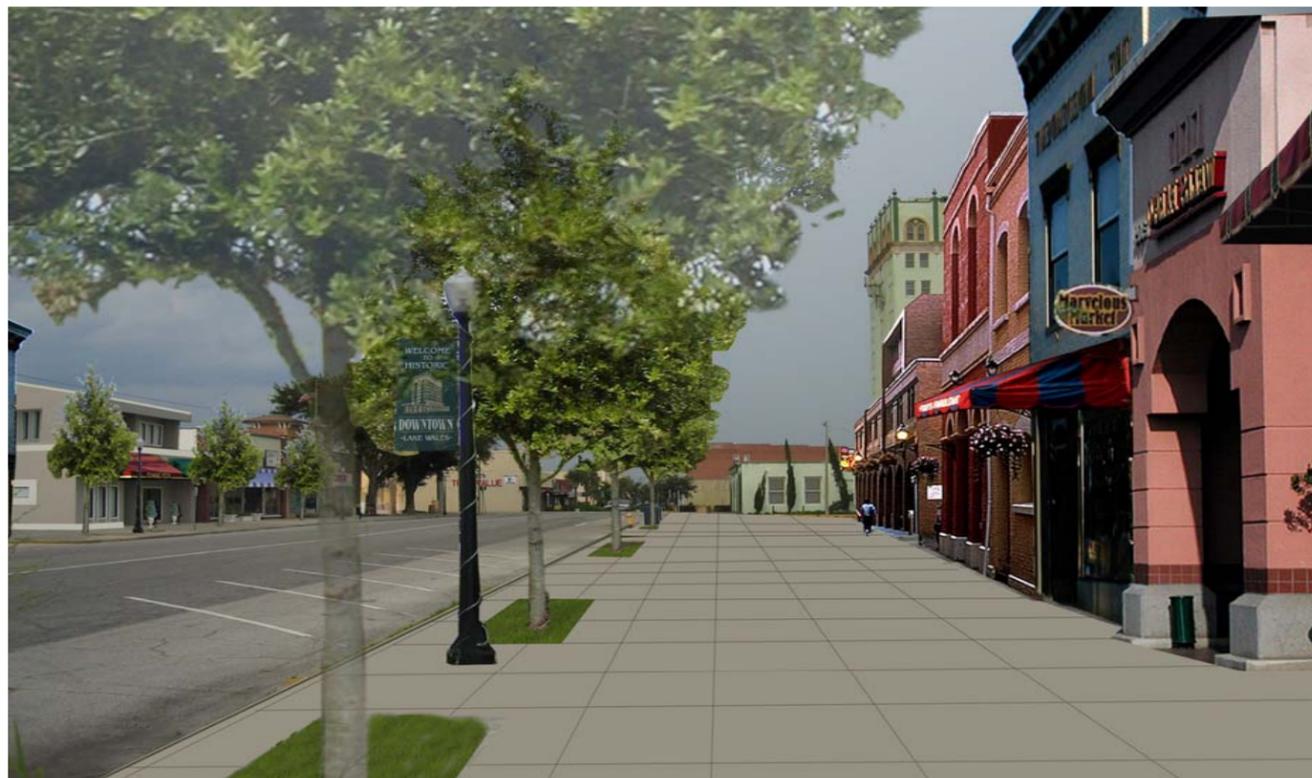
Martin & Vargas DESIGN, P.O. Box 452, Winter Park, Florida 32790
www.martinandvargas.com

Final Plan



VI. The Walesbilt Hotel Site

Before & After Visions



Prepared for



May, 2008

Final Plan

DOWNTOWN LAKE WALES MASTER PLAN

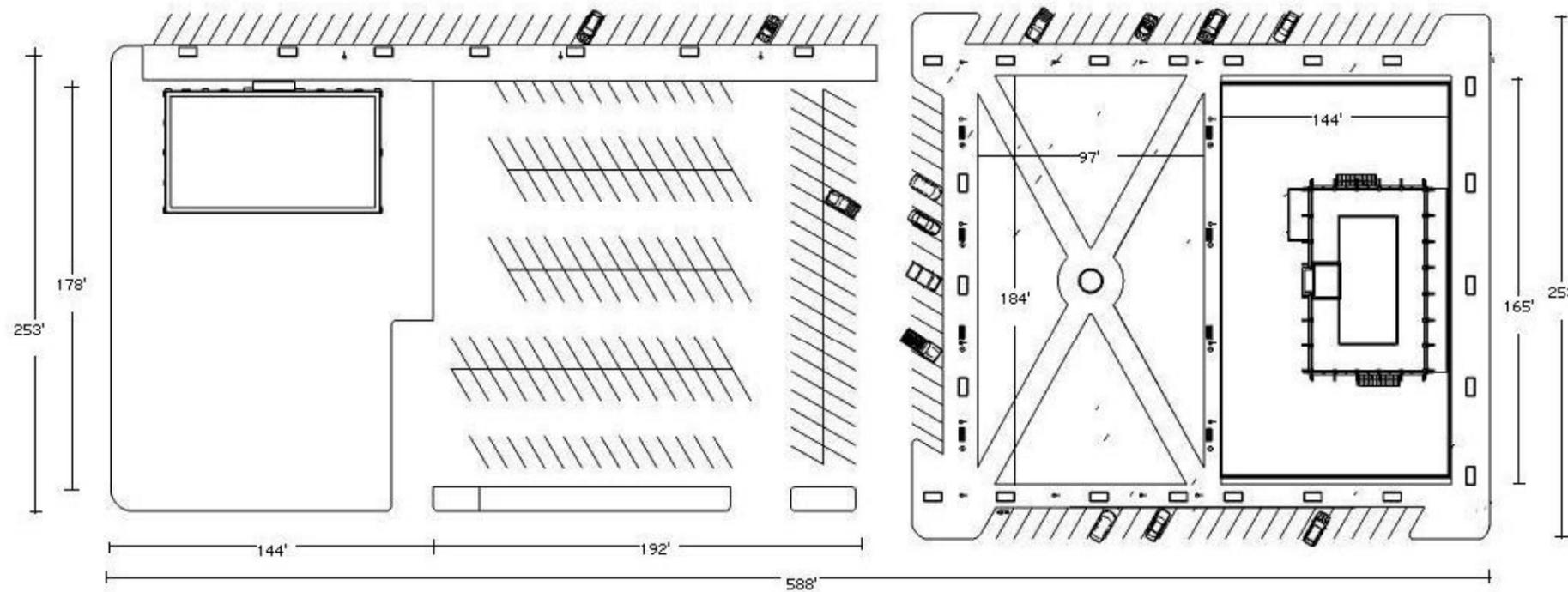
Martin & Vargas DESIGN, P.O. Box 452, Winter Park, Florida 32790
www.martinandvargas.com

Page 33

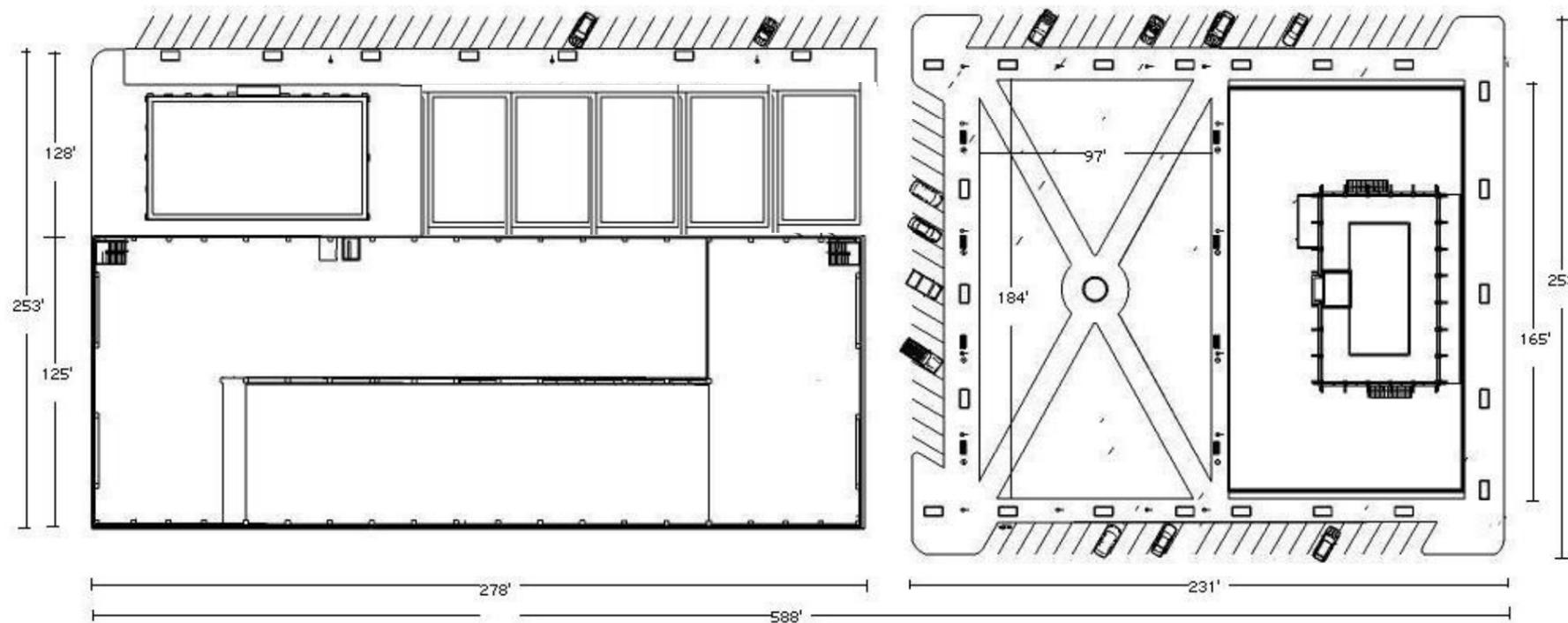


VI. The Walesbilt Hotel Site

Dimensions



As Depicted in Phase 3



As Depicted in Completed Vision

Prepared for



May, 2008

DOWNTOWN LAKE WALES MASTER PLAN

Martin & Vargas DESIGN, P.O. Box 452, Winter Park, Florida 32790
www.martinandvargas.com

Final Plan



VII. Funding and Implementation Strategies

In order to be actionable, a plan needs to be both visionary and attainable. A well designed vision can serve to excite the private sector and cause investors to step up and fund aspects of the plan. The plan serves as a guide to channel this investment. Building on the plan, well placed public investment further encourages private sector confidence to invest in the plan area. On the other hand, if the plan vision is too unrealistic, the plan will be shelved and not acted upon.

In the past, a typical method for funding infrastructure and streetscape improvements in Community Redevelopment Areas (including the Lake Wales CRA), was to bond the tax increment revenues generated from increasing property values. Last year the Florida Supreme Court reversed 30 years of precedence, ruling in the *Strand v Escambia County* Case No. SC 06-1894 that projects using tax dollars funded through bond financing need voter approval. The ruling has raised many new questions and has removed this type of CRA project financing as a viable method for the time being. A rehearing of the case occurred on October 9, 2007, with no potential new rulings expected until June. The Florida Redevelopment Association is also considering new legislation to help clarify how redevelopment bonds are approved.

Without easy access to bond financing, capital for major public infrastructure projects has become more limited and requires greater creativity by the local municipality. Here are a few ideas:

1. Prioritize public investment projects. The ranking should be based on which projects are likely to secure the highest private sector return.
2. Pay as you go: State law allows local governments to bank Tax Increment Funds (TIF) up to 4 years.

Prepared for



May, 2008

Final Plan

Then they must be spent. Calculate how much uncommitted TIF can be accrued over four years and design project phases to fit the available budget.

3. Transfer City portion of the yearly TIF to the CRA using non-tax revenues, e.g. revenues from user fees and charges. This revenue stream can then be bonded without voter referendums.

4. Evaluate use of Community Development Districts.

Individual projects specified by this master plan are detailed here. While specific project implementation strategies exceed the scope of this plan, some generalities can be provided.

Walesbilt Hotel Redevelopment

The top priority of the CRA Steering Committee is to address the redevelopment and reuse of the Walesbilt Hotel. Projects 1 – 6 accomplish this through a public-private partnership. The public sector should lead in all but project 4 (which would be the primary responsibility of the private sector), though the construction of the civic green (5) and parking lot (6) could also be required of the private sector. The allocation of TIF resources, per the pay as you go strategy or through a bonding of non-tax revenues transferred to the CRA from the City could be the source of funding.

If the library is to be moved, then the existing library property could redevelop (15) adding to the City tax base and supporting the CRA tax increment fund. In conjunction with the existing library property, the City would ideally execute projects 13 and 14 as well.

The other projects (7, 8, 9, 10, 11, and 12) are independent and can be implemented as opportunities present themselves.

Master Plan Projects

1. Library Needs Assessment
2. Walesbilt Building Reuse Space Plan
3. Grand Plaza Group Property Acquisition for Lake Wales City Center
4. Walesbilt Exterior Façade & First Two Floors Renovation
5. Lake Wales City Center Civic Green Developed
6. City Center Parking Lot Constructed
7. Park Avenue Streetscape (1st St to Wetmore Road)
8. Park & Stuart Avenue Landscape Upgraded & Additional Shade Trees Added
9. Infill and/or Enhance Type “A” Street Faces (buildings & surface parking street walls)
10. Orange Avenue Streetscape
11. Market Street Plaza Parking Piazza
12. Ridge Scenic Highway Beautification
13. Railroad Park Beautification
14. Orange Avenue Extension (to existing library building)
15. Library Property Redeveloped

DOWNTOWN LAKE WALES MASTER PLAN

Martin & Vargas DESIGN, P.O. Box 452, Winter Park, Florida 32790
www.martinandvargas.com