

White Paper – Councilor Joe Rola
Immediate Parking and traffic Intensity Relief for Olde Marco’s Residents

Ever since Marco became a city and perhaps even longer, many of the commercial interests on the island have been ignoring our zoning ordinances and Land Development codes. That approach seemed to work for these interests pretty well for the past 25 to 30 years. There was still room to grow and their “transgressions” were flying under the radar, but now that we are at Build Out, there is no hiding the adverse effects of their poor behaviors. Take Old Marco as an example. If we had an accurate tally of businesses in Old Marco, their original Site Plans and Commercial License and Zoning Certificates (CLUZC, aka CLUZA certificates), you might find that the number of parking spaces available for employees and commercial patrons has been consistently double booked. Too many customers and insufficient parking provided by the commercial vendors. So, what are these parking challenged-purveyors of Marco’s economic engine to do? Live within their limited parking means and suffer reduced revenues? Certainly not! Direct their overflows to the public right of ways throughout Olde Marco or even the residential and condo parking lots and driveways. The residents of Olde Marco have given city staff, city council and the LTE reading public, prolific example of their degraded life style in Old Marco especially in season, but now with Build Out is there really such a concept as off season? The residents of Olde Marco really need some major consideration from their local government to alleviate this travesty.

Here are a few realistic conceptual solutions that could be initiated to offer immediate relief to our Old Marco neighbors:

1. Initiate and enforce an immediate **NO Parking Ordinance in swales fronting non-commercial properties** in Olde Marco. This would force all businesses in Olde Marco to adjust their business plans to distribute their customer base to match the parking that their establishments provide on-site. This would necessitate new businesses to rethink their business models to reflect limited parking in Olde Marco and perhaps consider pooling their efforts with other businesses to establish alternate parking arrangements supported by shuttle transport for patrons to their favorite commercial purveyors in Olde Marco. This

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approach might create an issue for residents and contractors serving the residents in Olde Marco, but it would instantly provide improved Quality of Life, pedestrian bicycle safety and less traffic intensity for the residents of Olde Marco.

2. An alternate to the previous concept would be **Parking by Permit Only in swales fronting non-commercial properties** for residents of Olde Marco and Contractors serving Olde Marco. In this case, residents (and contractors regularly serving Olde Marco) could obtain an Olde Marco Parking Pass from city hall by presenting their proof of Olde Marco residency and their auto registration. The residents could obtain parking stickers for each of their vehicles that would permit their swale parking in Olde Marco, similar to the county’s Beach Parking system. Code enforcement would be straightforward. Any vehicle parking in the residential swales of Olde Marco without a city-approved swale parking permit would be subject to citation. This alternative would provide immediate relief for Olde Marco residents while minimizing any additional parking restrictions on them.

3. The city Manager has suggested a **Master Plan proposal for Olde Marco**. Personally, I’m not enthusiastic about “master plans”. I find that they take time to develop, at considerable expense and they really do need the complete buy-in from the community. In the case of Olde Marco, our Island’s Historic District, a Master Plan might be the best and only option for the controlled and professionally planned development of a critical aspect of our island’s past. When this proposal comes forward, the residents should pay close attention and stay informed about the proposed plans and how these plans will protect our heritage and Quality of Life as we advance thru the 21st century.

4. While we are deciding the path going forward for Olde Marco, it is only logical to **initiate a Moratorium on Commercial Development in Olde Marco**. This Moratorium would be similar to the Density Transfer Moratorium that Councilor

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Rios sponsored several years ago. That Moratorium stopped any proposals for density Transfers for about one and a half years while council and city staff flushed out the pros and cons of overturning a Density Transfer Option on Marco. A Commercial Development Moratorium lasting about 1 ½ years would give our city planning staff time to investigate the feasibility of a Master Plan concept for Olde Marco and perhaps even set the ground-work for the whole community to embrace.

Conclusion:

The best approach to provide immediate relief for Olde Marco Residents is to execute Proposal #2. It is cost-effective, requiring the purchase and installation of NO Parking w/o Permit signs on the residential swales in Old Marco. Parking Permit stickers are not a big expense and not every Olde Marco Resident will need or want one. The County disperses their Beach Parks n Rec stickers through the existing Library staff. We could use our existing Parks n Rec staff at Mackle Park or city staff at city hall. Code enforcement should not require excessive effort beyond what they have experienced on Swallow, Seagrape etc. and once established, the required staffing level will drop off.

At the same time, council should initiate the Moratorium on Commercial Development in Old Marco described in Proposal #4. We have successfully used Moratorium legislation in the past. It works and it will buy us time to investigate logical planning approaches and get public Buy-in going forward.

And to complete the triage of efforts, we should review, comment upon and move forward with a Phase 1 of an Olde Marco Master Planning activity. From my perspective, the “sheet is blank”. Much work needs to be done and the clock is ticking. We have put an immediate band aide on the problem, but island intensity is only going to increase while island real estate and infrastructure is fixed.