

[Narrator] You've tuned in to another edition of The Breakroom, a

weekly conversation about how the City of Saint Augustine

works from those who do the work every day. Hosted by the

City of Saint Augustine's communications director Melissa

Wissel. The Breakroom offers a closer look at the different

city departments and provides updates on current and upcoming

projects and events and now your host Melissa Wissel.

[Melissa] Thanks for tuning in to The Break Room. I'm Melissa

Wissel, communications director for the City of Saint

Augustine and this week, I've invited our Planning and

Building Director Amy Skinner

back so we can talk just a

little bit more about the
parking ordinance update coming

before the City Commission for
second reading. Amy, welcome

back. [Amy] Thank you. I appreciate
you having me back. [Melissa] I I think

some people maybe listening and
thinking they're talking about

parking again. Yes, we are.

[Amy] Yes, we are. [Melissa] It's important.

[Amy] It's been a long strained
issue. It's it's an important

issue. Um I did want to ask you
once again, I know and if if

folks are tuning in and it
feels redundant. I'm not

going to apologize because it

is a really important issue and

I feel like we try to take as
many opportunities as we can to

remind the community what we're
talking about, why we're

talking about it. We've been
seeing a lot of folks come to

city commission for public
comment which to me sometimes

either tells me people are
engaging which is great. [Amy] Yes,

we really actually do
appreciate the comments because

now we can hear we can hear
what their thought process is.

We can hear what the concerns
are and we do appreciate

everyone's effort and and
thoughts because actually and

we've had some good good
comments come out. [Melissa] Good

comments. So, let's rewind just
a little bit back to 2018.

This all started with mobility
in general. [Amy] Right. [Melissa] We we've got

mobility problems and that and
that's not talking mobility

like handicap access. We're
talking ability to get around

town, people, cars,
transportation. [Amy] Right. And I

know, you know, as a planner, I
can, it sounds like maybe I'm

on in a on a different planet
but you we can even go you

know, 30 years ago we were
talking about peripheral

parking right and and things
like that and for a lot of

reasons decisions didn't get
made or whatever but here but

now you know here we are [Melissa] and
I've even heard I wasn't here

at the time but there was talks
years ago about a parking

garage behind city hall. [Amy] Yes I
mean I've been here for 35

years. [Melissa] Mm hmm. [Amy] And working in
in different aspects but I've

been with the city for 18 years
and so we did have

conversations a long time ago
about kind of anticipating

this. I don't think anyone had
the real foresight to see what

had was happened and how we've
become kind of such a

destination and even with the

growth in the county such a

entertainment district for for
the county. [Melissa] Yeah. And not yet

because it's not even just the
tourism aspect. It's people

living here. [Amy] Right. And
actually in 2013 to be honest

with you the state legislature
changed the statutes and it

started to encourage local
jurisdictions to look at

different forms of
transportation because actually

when you like I4 it's pretty
big example vehicles aren't

cars aren't working you know
the most of Florida has

developed after World War two
let's just say and so it's very

vehicle centering we don't have
a lot of other options we are

[Melissa] we are very vehicle centric

[Amy] society it's a in general and

we're we're in a situation
where we're having to kind of

retrofit. [Melissa] Sure. [Amy] Um other other
things. [Melissa] It's a good way of

putting it. And and we're lucky
we have a little urban area

that maybe we gives us more
options than other sort of just

sprawling. [Melissa] Right. [Amy] You know
Central Florida or whatever for

example. For example. Um but
that conversation started in

twenty thirteen. Then as you
said in 2018 we started

seriously talking about a
mobility plan and we actually

are were required to update our comprehensive plan and so we

recognized actually a long time ago but we reiterated in 2018

and 2020 that because of our urban nature and our historic

nature, we don't have the option of just plowing

everything down and widening roads. [Melissa] Right. [Amy] You know, we

can't take King Street and make it into a four-layer road.

Right. We're just not going to because our priority and we and

we've set this policy for a long time even in the historic

districts which is why we don't require the historic districts

to provide parking because

we're trying to keep the

historic buildings, we didn't
want somebody to have to tear

down a building in order to
build a parking lot. [Melissa] That song.

Right. Take paradise and turn
it to parking lot. Right. We're

not we're trying not to do
that. [Amy] So we're balancing all

these issues. We've got
transportation issues, traffic

issues, parking issues but we
have priorities for historic

preservation trying to you know
live well trying to have

historic neighborhoods and a
quality of life. So we've heard

a lot of of concerns about
that. And and in 2020

after a two year process we
adopted the comprehensive plan

which included a mobility plan.

[Melissa] Right. And a new component

right? [Amy] That was a component and
it was you know even kind of

radical back then but that's
six years ago already right and

the there are basically four
parts to the mobility plan

there actually is kind of a
walking and bicycling plan a

transit circulator plan which
we're start here we have a star

[Melissa] right star circulator [Amy] star
circulator and and people say

well you know how's that
working well and it's just

going in a circle well it's
just the first of potentially

five different kind of
circulator routes lines lines

that we're talking about. So,
it's just the first one. [Melissa] You

know, Gotta start somewhere.

[Amy] You have to start somewhere and

there are actually five
different routes in the plant.

Okay. Then, we also talked
about multimodal ways which mean

that is weird term to basically
say the mobility plan looks at

four different areas for
kind of peripheral parking

garages. We have the existing
parking garage downtown. We

have the Broudy parking garage
on kind of the west side which

it has been talked about and

you know. [Melissa] It's approved. [Amy] It's

approved. Within barring any
unforeseen circumstances.

Right. There within the next
couple years we're hoping to

have that that is built. Yep.

And then we're talking about

one north of town out on
Anastasia Boulevard out to the

east and to the south. So that
theoretically people can stop

park in those parking garages
eventually and right now we're

talking about the Browdy one
mainly. You can park there. If

you want to come downtown, you
don't have to hassle. Right.

And you actually can stay off
the downtown roads. Well, and

that's one of those extra lines
you're talking about with the

Star Circulator. You're not
going to park when when the

Brody Lot comes online, you're
not going to have to walk into

downtown. Right. I mean, you
can. Right. But we're also

going to drop you at the
Visitor Information Center

which is essentially where you
want to start your journey.

Right. [Amy] Which is is correct and
I and I think that's that's a

huge that's a huge thing
because it would be it's

convenient for anyone to park
at Browdy's hop on a circulator

come down to the visitor
information center and from

there you can walk uptown right

you can walk downtown you can

[Melissa] or take it to another bus [Amy] or

take it to another bus so

[Melissa] hopefully it's going to have

more than just the one yeah

[Amy] theoretically you you could go

across the bridge potentially

and and enjoy Anastasia on

Anastasia Island and so so

likewise as we're talking about

Brodies if we eventually get

some kind of parking garage out

on Anastasia Island if you're

coming in from the beach you

can just park there hop on a

circulator come downtown or

walk to a place on Anastasia

Boulevard and and enjoy that

and not have to be on the roads

also we there's part of the
mobility plan there's a streets

plan to you know start to
upgrade our streets in general

so that they're safer for
pedestrians you know streets

and sidewalks they're safer for
pedestrians safer for

bicyclists safer for other
alternative modes of we're

trying to encourage pedestrian
connections things like that

and by collecting a mobility
fee which we have been

collecting a mobility fee for
the last couple years we have a

pot of money that has to be
specifically used on mobility

improvements so things are
coming [Melissa] so part of this so in

all of that just to circle back
yes what's important to know

about the mobility plan though
as you just said these

discussions started 6, 10
years ago been going on for a

long time. We find ourselves
now with this parking

ordinance. People are paying
attention. It's it is going to

impact people but and you and I
have talked about it. What

really underlies all of this in
my opinion, this is just me and

you and I have talked about it
but I think it's the fear of

change. [Amy] Yes. [Melissa] And the impact and
the ripple effect. So, if

you're just now tuning in,
you're listening to the break

room and I've got Amy Skinner
with us this week. She's our

planning and building director.
We're kind of recapping Little

bit and little bit of a
discussion about the upcoming

parking ordinance that's going
again before the commission for

second reading to be passed and
what we want our listeners to

hear is we recognize that these
changes are going to impact

residents but what we also want
folks to realize is there's

ways for us to help in the
aftermath of all that. [Amy] Yes.

[Melissa] Residential parking is a big

concern in terms of that

peripheral overflow. What's
going to happen in the

residential areas and then the
business owners in parking

lots. [Amy] Yes. So. And updating
this parking code is really the

last piece of this sort of
mobility plan because if our in

general if our parking code
contradicts what we're trying

to achieve with the mobility
plan then you know we won't be

able to get there. [Melissa] Get there.
Literally. [Amy] And and it is a

change. It is a transition to
somewhat of a a new way of

thinking. The parking code
hadn't been updated since

1988. The engineer
manual related to parking has

been updated four times. Oh. In
that same time period. So. [Melissa] We

need to catch up with that. [Amy] We
need to catch up. So there are

basically five areas that we
updated in the parking code. We

kind of updated design
standards. One of them is

talking about alternative
surfaces because we also have

the resiliency issue. Mm hmm.
We get flooded and everything's

paved. The water has nowhere to
go. Right. And so we want to be

able to use surfaces to you
know not pave paradise and be

able to absorb water. [Melissa] Right. [Amy] Uh
we added flexibility so that if

you're having to provide
parking if you need parking

then there are kind of flexible
options and how you can do

that. Because a lot of our
properties are very small

properties and their old
properties you know they are

traditional commercial areas
especially like in the uptown

area and and different areas
where there isn't existing

parking. So, we've opened up
flexible options. We've updated

the actual requirements based
on the the latest engineering

manual and we've introduced
other concepts like shared

parking so you can truly share

parking if you have daytime use

and a nighttime use or if you
have a mixed project where it's

residential and commercial
we're trying to encourage that

so obviously if if people live
here upstairs and they work in

Jacksonville and they're gone
all day then the commercial

downstairs can use the parking
lot and you're not having to

double the right provide
parking but one of the things

that I think is had the most
conversation are the kind of

the neighborhood development.

Right. Areas where we've

actually eliminated parking in
some of these corridor areas

like San Marco like King Street
and West King Street and on

Washington Street. [Melissa] Right. [Amy] So,
these are kind of key corridor

areas that are commercially
zoned. So, the properties that

actually front on these
corridors in the in this

version of the code aren't
required to provide parking.

It's intended as a economic
development tool and to

actually make it easier for
local smaller businesses to be

able to come in because.

[Melissa] Startup. [Amy] Parking is expensive.

[Melissa] And if you make if you're
making a parking. So if it's I

have a 500 square foot business
and I'm required to have a

certain number of parking

spaces that could be

prohibitive. Right. For me.

Right. The one thing before we

run out of time we have a few

minutes left. I wanted to make

sure though that we address the

flip side of that. [Amy] Yes. [Melissa] Um

which is the residents which I

think you and I talked about

this and I think there's this

sense of you know but then

these people are going to start

parking in my parking lots or

even you know parking lots. We

can't control if someone's

parking in your business

parking lot and that's your

lot. That unfortunately that's

that's the responsibility of a

business owner to manage their
parking. That being said, our

residents have probably a lot
more options than they think

they do. [Amy] Yes. [Melissa] So, I want to
make sure we cover that and you

can explain it but I'll just
highlight it. It's things like

yellow curbing, looking at the
traffic on your streets for one

ways, and implementing some
residential parking

requirements. Give us a few
highlights of that. Before

[Amy] because there is no doubt and
I'm very sympathetic that these

neighborhoods are under a lot
of pressure. Um Flip side is

that we do have a residential parking program and it actually

is very flexible. We get, you know, if a neighborhood gets

together and decides they want to implement it, there is a

process but you can set, you know, days, certain days,

certain hours of that you know critical where the city can

help enforce parking so that you know if if you know that

you were [Melissa] I don't mean to interrupt it no tell me about

Saint South Saint George Street you're telling me yeah that was

a great example South South Saint George Street was under a

lot of pressure too from people just coming and parking and

then walking downtown well they

got together they developed a

residential parking program

it's only from one in one in

the afternoon until later in

the evening and so it's not like it's

twenty-four seven that

everyone's limited but you

during those key hours that

they identify were issues for

people coming downtown that

it's enforced and also if if

you have like a birthday party

or if you know that you're

going to have group of people

coming people come over you can

call our parking division Tara

we're you know Tara's very

responsive and and let us know.

Let the city know that hey, I'm

having a birthday party. I'm
going to have a few, you know,

extra cars parked on the
street, this and that. We have,

there's plenty of places where
we can enforce parking if you

know. Yeah. If we know you're
having a party, we don't

necessarily have to be there.

Right. [Melissa] We can we can let you

have your we can let you have
your friends over for the

birthday party and and come
back later. [Amy] Right. So, there

are flexible options that you
just mentioned the yellow

curving. If if streets are
tight and you people are are

thinking that it's gets just

too tight then also we can

consider one one way pairs

where you have one way one on

one street and then one way on

the other street and you have

companion pairs and and it

calms the traffic down so that

you have maybe parking on one

side and then the open lane on

the other side so you're not

having to zig and zag through

trying to weave your way

through parking you know parked

cars. [Melissa] So the I think the

biggest takeaway for us today

is We know the parking

ordinance is coming. We really

want to work with the residents

and the business owners so call

Amy. Call X Pelicer and he's

our mobility manager, Tara

Benny for parking. Consider

getting together with your

residents. We really want to

work with you. We're not just

over at city hall. You know,

and trying to come up with

ideas of of making life

difficult but it's going to

take time. [Amy] Right. [Melissa] And change is

hard. [Amy] And I do understand and

until I got married, I live

like on Aviles Street and you know

we're constantly battling

people and everything. So I'm

very sympathetic and I would I

really do want to hear how we

can make this work for everyone

but but we're as a planner I'm

trained to look 30 years in
advance and [Melissa] it's coming. [Amy] When I

see the county at 500, 000
people. [Melissa] Right. [Amy] In the next 30

years we have to control our
own destiny. [Melissa] Yeah. We've we've

gotta do something now. [Amy] Right.

And we're trying. Well Thank

you again for coming back.

Hopefully we've answered some

more questions or had a little
bit of a conversation that put

some things in perspective and
give a call out to the planning

and building office or mobility
and let us hear from you. [Amy] Thank

you. Thanks Amy. [Melissa] You can now
find us on your podcasting apps

and at City StAugRo.

com for a listing of all those

places you can find this
episode and more. We want you

to hear about what's happening
in and around the city. Thanks

for tuning in. Until next time.

[Narrator] You've been listening to The

Breakroom, a weekly program
addressing projects and

programs offered by the City of
St. Augustine. Join us each

week as the city's
communications director,

Melissa Whistle, has in-depth
conversations with the people

who make our town work to meet
the needs of our community. See

you at this time next week for
another edition of The

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