Parking garage could be money-making machine

St. Augustine, Fla., proves modern convenience has place in historic town

By JACK FICHTER
Cape May Star and Wave

ST. AUGUSTINE, Fla. — John Regan, city manager of the oldest continuously occupied European-established settlement in the contiguous U.S., has plenty of praise for having a parking garage in a historic town.

Regan, who was the project manager of the garage, and city council were mindful of the effects of constructing a parking garage.

“It was a very controversial issue, one you can imagine,” he said. “Almost 95% said they didn’t want a parking garage.”

The question did not go to voter referendum and the city planned using nontraditional funding mechanisms and service charges, which are not based upon the value of the property and outline.

St. Augustine started with fact-finding and 22 public outreach meetings, Regan said. The fact-finding included determining what the tourist load was and how many parking spaces were available.

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It was a very controversial issue. There was a lot of discussion on the real input to improve the design to meet their concepts of what they viewed as a historic area, Regan said.

Regan said he had worked with groups to get their input to improve the design. “In your case, it was a parking and traffic machine,” Regan said. “In your case, it was a parking and traffic machine.”

He said St. Augustine, Fla., financed and built a $21 million, 1,170-space parking garage that opened in 2006, and found that not only did it fit in and our economy has done something much, much better with it, he said.

Regan, who is a trained economist, recommended a smaller structure on the downtown site. The current garage was owned by the city manager, who is a trained economist.

Regan and his staff know that the parking garage opened in 2006. He said it was a very controversial issue. He had a number of parking complaints on his desk Monday morning, but Regan said that the garage was owned by the city manager, who is a trained economist.

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With a CRA, a base year of what the taxation value of all structures within the area is determined. On this value is based on the amount of improvements or what are there.

In St. Augustine, for its new parking garage, there was 50 cents go to the county and almost 50 cents go to the county and 50 cents go to the county.

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For the business community, this garage is a lifesaver.

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