

# Existing Community Character

LaBelle is a special place with a rich history and unique character.

## Commercial Character Pedestrian Scale and Grid

Currently, the Walking District spans approximately ±70 acres. The district encompasses the area from SR 80 north to the Caloosahatchee River along both sides of Bridge Street, and then begins to expand outward to include the area between Lee and Missouri Streets from SR 80 to Fort Thompson Road to the east; and from the intersection of Hampton Avenue and Main Street southwest to the intersection of Campbell Street and SR 80 to the west.

Within this area there are a multitude of uses that contribute to the pedestrian nature of the downtown area: retail shops, offices, civic areas, restaurants, single and multi-family residences. This walkable character is reinforced by the existing vehicular grid system. The grid creates an ease of movement for both pedestrians and vehicles and opens up opportunities throughout Downtown LaBelle for redevelopment, infill development and future development where businesses can be easily accessed by foot or by car.

**Downtown LaBelle is anchored by three major focal features:**

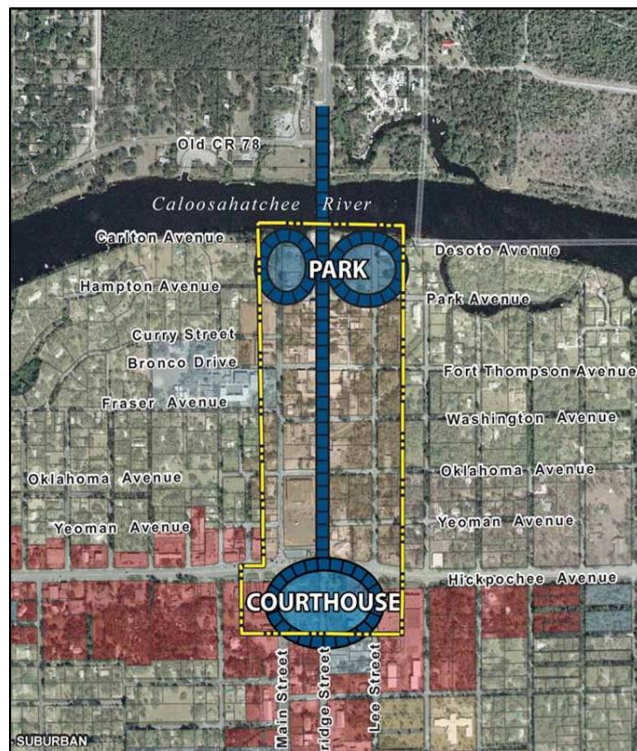
- Barron Park
- Caloosahatchee River
- Hendry County Courthouse.

Currently there is limited public parking in and around the downtown area, and no on-street parking on Bridge and Main Streets, although provisions for parking on these streets are viewed as desirable. Due to the unknown future of the bridge and the current Strategic Intermodal System (SIS) designation for SR 29, the inclusion of such facilities will most likely be a significant challenge. Although clear delineation does not exist, many of the cross streets throughout the downtown area are used for

on-street parking. For example, Bronco Drive between Bridge Street and Main Street has adequate width for parallel on-street parking and is utilized in this manner.

**Focal Points**  
Downtown LaBelle is anchored by three major focal features: Barron Park and the Caloosahatchee River to the north, and the Hendry County Courthouse to the

south. This historic landmark was built in 1925, and is situated on the southeast corner of SR 80 and SR 29. These features help to delineate the Walking District both north and south.



Focal Points

## Varied Architectural Styles

The existing commercial structures found throughout the downtown area are a mix of architectural styles. The styles include Old Florida, Spanish Revival, Colonial Revival, Mission, and Modern; Old Florida or Florida Cracker is the most common.



*Old Florida or Cracker*



*Spanish Revival*

## Mix of Uses

The grid system and its pedestrian and vehicular circulation contribute to the mix of uses that are located within the downtown. While these uses include commercial, institutional and professional businesses, a significant portion of the area is comprised of vacant lots.

## Residential Character

### Predominantly Single Family

The residential component of the downtown consists primarily of single family development. The majority of this housing is located along the east and west edges of the downtown. There are two multi-family housing developments, one located just east of Barron Park and the other at the northern end of Hickory Street. The downtown also includes two mobile home parks, one located on Lee Street and the other along the Caloosahatchee River.



*Business from Converted Residential*

Between the commercial core area along Bridge Street and the residential edges of the downtown, the land use pattern reflects a mix of land uses to create what might be considered a transition area. Within this transition area, it is not uncommon to see residential houses that have been converted to offices or businesses. This transitional area works well as a buffer between the more dedicated residential areas east and west and the true commercial area along Bridge Street.

### Links and Walkability

Due to the nature of the City's grid pattern, there are established links to downtown that provide either pedestrian or vehicular access to services such as schools, churches, restaurants, professional services and the public library.

## Downtown Park & Waterfront

Barron Park and the Caloosahatchee River is one of the most prominent and historically important focal points for the City of LaBelle and its community. In the same location since the formation of the city, Barron Park contains approximately 4.5 acres and is situated at the northern end of the Walking District, with the Caloosahatchee River along the north and Park Avenue to the south. Access to the park and the waterfront extends west beyond



*View of Existing Wharf*



*Existing Barron Park Gazebo*

Barron Park under the bridge to the intersection of Carlton Avenue and Main Street. This area includes a public boat dock facility that allows for overnight guests; however the size of the docking area is limited.



*News Press, February 23, 2008*

*42<sup>nd</sup> annual Swamp Cabbage Festival*

Barron Park serves mostly as a passive recreation area where people come to view the river, eat lunch, fish or sit and chat. There are also tennis courts and a basketball court for more active pursuits. In addition, it serves as a community gathering space, and historically has done so since the City's beginnings.

Weddings, fund raising activities, Christmas in the Park and various other community social events are but a sampling of how the park is used.

Since 1967, Barron Park has been known best as the home of the Swamp Cabbage Festival, an annual event held on the last weekend in February, which welcomes over 30,000 festival goers to LaBelle each year.



*Existing Tree Canopy*

## **Oak Canopy**

LaBelle, known as the City of Oaks, has many large, mature oak trees that grace the lawns and streets of the community and dot the landscapes of public spaces such as the library, courthouse and park. While graceful and beautiful, some trees are beginning to show signs of decline. A maintenance and replanting program should be considered to ensure continued existence of the oak canopy for years to come.