



CITY OF BARTOW  
**RECREATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE REVISED REGULAR MEETING**  
WEDNESDAY, APRIL 8, 2026 AT 5:30 PM  
OR AS SOON THEREAFTER AS POSSIBLE  
CITY HALL COMMISSION CHAMBERS  
450 NORTH WILSON AVE., BARTOW, FL 33830

**AGENDA**

1. CALL TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL
2. INVOCATION
3. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE TO THE FLAG
4. APPROVAL OF MINUTES
  - a. February 11, 2026
5. PUBLIC COMMENT
6. DIRECTOR'S REPORT
  - a. Parks, Recreation, and Cultural Arts Director Jason Hargrove
7. OLD BUSINESS
  - a. Advisory Board Member Shirts
  - b. MLK Gazebo Mural
8. NEW BUSINESS
  - a. Bartow Youth Baseball - Carver Recreation Center Multi-Purpose Field
9. ADVISORY BOARD COMMENTS
10. CITY COMMISSIONER COMMENTS
11. NEXT MEETING DATE - May 13, 2026
12. ADJOURNMENT

Please be advised that if you desire to appeal any decisions made as a result of the above hearing or meeting, you will need a record of the proceedings and in some cases, a verbatim record is required. You must make your own arrangements to produce this record. (Florida Statute 286.0105) If you are a person

with a disability who needs any accommodation in order to participate in this proceeding, you are entitled, at no cost to you, to the provision of certain assistance. Please contact the City Clerk's Office at 450 N. Wilson Avenue, P.O. Box 1069, Bartow, Florida 33831-1069, or phone (863) 534-0100 within 2 working days of your receipt of this meeting notification; if you are hearing or voice impaired, call 1-800-955-8771. Posted at City Hall and the City's Website [www.cityofbartow.net](http://www.cityofbartow.net) on April 1, 2026.

**CITY OF BARTOW  
JOINT RECREATION ADVISORY BOARD AND CITY COMMISSION MEETING  
WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 11, 2026 – 5:30 P.M. (EST)  
CITY COMMISSION CHAMBER, CITY HALL  
450 N. WILSON AVENUE, BARTOW, FL 33830**

**MINUTES**

The City of Bartow Recreation Advisory Board held a Joint City Commission meeting on Wednesday, February 11, 2026, at 5:30 p.m. at City Hall in the City Commission Chamber, 450 N. Wilson Avenue, Bartow. Notice of this meeting was posted at City Hall, Bartow Public Library, and on the City's website [www.cityofbartow.net](http://www.cityofbartow.net).

**1. CALL TO ORDER**

Chairperson Keith called the meeting to order at 5:30 p.m.

**2. INVOCATION**

Board Member Lung gave the invocation.

**3. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

The Board Members gave the Pledge of Allegiance to the United States of America Flag.

**4. ROLL CALL**

Assistant City Clerk Kaylee Fussell called the roll and attendance was as follows:

**BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT:** Board Member Bill Bohde, Board Member Leslie Green, Board Member Troy Lung, Board Member Carver Young, Vice-Chairperson and Board Member Sheila Keith, Chairperson

**BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT:** None

**CITY COMMISSIONERS PRESENT:** Mayor Tanya Tucker, Vice Mayor Laura Simpson, Commissioner Gary Ball, Commissioner Leo Longworth, and Commissioner Trish Pfeiffer

**STAFF PRESENT:** Parks, Recreation and Cultural Arts Director Jason Hargrove, Parks and Recreation Assistant Director Kyle Lasek, City Attorney Sean Parker, Finance Director Peter Lear, Director Community Redevelopment Agency (CRA) Howard Smith, Business and Community Engagement Coordinator Cheryl Baksh and Assistant City Clerk Kaylee Fussell.

**5. APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

**a. January 14, 2026 – Regular Meeting**

**MOTION** was made Board Member Bohde, seconded by Board Member Young to approve the minutes from January 14, 2026, Regular Meeting as presented.

**VOTE TO THE MOTION WAS AS FOLLOWS:**

**AYE:** Bohde, Green, Keith, Lung, Young

**NAY:** None

Motion carried.

**5. GENERAL PUBLIC COMMENT** – At this time, the Board will receive comments from the public regarding matters not appearing on this agenda.

Chairperson Keith opened and closed the floor to receive comments from the public regarding matters not appearing on this agenda. There were no comments.

**6. DIRECTOR’S REPORT**

**a. Parks, Recreation, and Cultural Arts Director Jason Hargrove**

Director Hargrove provided updates on several departmental projects. For the Golf Course, he noted that a presentation on Legacy Bricks and Sponsorship opportunities will be given at the next meeting. Regarding the Library, the mural project has commenced, and the Story Trail project is currently out for bid, with bid openings scheduled for March 4<sup>th</sup>. In Parks and Recreation, Director Hargrove reported that there was another vandalism at the downtown restroom, we are currently getting quotes to have camera installed on the outside of the restroom facilities. He reported on the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) project at Nye Jordan Park, which includes installation of a wheelchair-accessible swing. He also provided an update on the Carver Recreation Center driveway project and noted that the department is awaiting a final quote for cameras to be installed at the new restrooms. Under General Items, Director Hargrove announced that CRA Director Howard Smith will present proposed restroom murals for the Downtown and Over the Branch locations. Additionally, there will be an update on the General Fund concerning Property Tax Relief and the Aquatics Program, with presentations to be made by Director Hargrove and Finance Director Peter Lear.

*(A copy of the report is attached therein and described as Exhibit A)*

Director Hargrove provided an overview of the project history and scope for the proposed Aquatics Center. The project scope includes the construction of a six-lane recreational pool, a zero-depth entry pool, a splash pad, and an updated pump and filtration system. Additional components of the project include demolition of the existing pool, installation of shade pavilions, pool furnishings, lighting, restroom modifications, site work and landscaping, and associated permit and design services.

The project, planned for the Bartow Civic Center location, was originally designed to include a separate zero-depth entry pool and splash pad or a combined feature integrating both. The project's initial budget was set at \$3.5 million, while the estimated total project cost came in at \$6.35 million. The initial design estimate was \$8 million, but Director Hargrove met with the design company to adjust the scope and reduce costs.

Estimated recurring operational costs were also presented. If operation were contracted to the YMCA on a year-round basis, the estimated annual cost would be \$1.29 million; if operated by the City, the cost would be approximately \$1.2 million. For a seasonal operation of 25 weeks, personnel costs are estimated at \$535,000. Additional operating costs for utilities, chemicals, insurance, repairs, and supplies are estimated at \$210,000 for a year-round operation and \$100,000 for seasonal operation.

Director Hargrove emphasized that all figures are preliminary estimates. The estimated total annual operating cost would be as follows:

- Year-Round (contracted): \$1.5 million
- Year-Round (City operated): \$1.41 million
- Seasonal (contracted): \$680,000
- Seasonal (City operated): \$631,000

Finance Director Lear provided an update regarding proposed state property tax reform measures and their potential fiscal impact on the City. One of the primary proposals under consideration would eliminate property taxes on homestead properties. If enacted, this change would result in an estimated \$3,147,831 reduction in General Fund revenue for the current fiscal year, based on the adopted budget.

Finance Director Lear also noted that the legislature is again proposing to limit the transfer of funds from enterprise operations to the General Fund as dividend. Historically, these transfers totaled more than \$9 million, currently reduced to \$6 million. If capped at 10% as proposed, the city would lose an additional \$2.25 million in revenue. Furthermore, a proposed statewide budget adjustment from the Florida CFO would require municipalities to present budgets reflecting a 10% reduction, which would result in an additional \$3.8 million loss. In total, if all three measures were enacted, the City's General Fund would experience an approximate \$9.2 million revenue reduction – representing 25% of the current \$38.4 million General Fund Budget.

Finance Director Lear explained that with a reduced General Fund revenue of \$29.2 million, combined with potential costs of \$2.5 - \$2.8 million for Aquatics Center construction and \$1.4 million in annual operating expenses (subject to increase), the timing for the proposed Aquatics Center project presents significant financial challenges. He emphasized the competing priorities within the General Fund,

including the \$10.9 million Police Department budget (which cannot be reduced without gubernatorial approval), the Fire Department's \$1.4 million general fund subsidy (25% of their budget), and the \$7.5 million Parks and Recreation budget.

Additional financial commitments include the City's "Employer of Choice" policy, projected to cost \$1.5 million in the next fiscal year; a \$1 million transfer to transportation operations; and a \$1.4 million subsidy for the Golf Course and Mulligans operations. Finance Director Lear concluded by stating that, given the potential fiscal impacts of the proposed legislation and the ongoing operational costs of the Aquatics Center, it is not advisable at this time for the City to proceed with the project from a financial standpoint.

*(A copy of the presentation is attached therein and described as Exhibit B)*

Commissioner Pfeiffer reported that she had spoken with the Advocacy Committee, which noted they are currently in week five of the legislative session, with bills still being reviewed and adjusted. It is anticipated that within approximately two weeks, it will be clear which bills are advancing to the floor for consideration.

She and Vice-Mayor Simpson recently met with Ms. Kincart-Johnson, during which they discussed the challenges of funding a new pool, given the current uncertainty surrounding proposed property tax elimination and potential reductions to municipal enterprise fund transfers. Following receipt of Director Hargrove's report on the Aquatics Center, Commissioner Pfeiffer shared it with Ms. Kincart-Johnson to provide context regarding the City's current fiscal constraints and the difficulty of making major financial commitments amid potential budget reductions. She emphasized that these financial challenges have become increasingly severe in recent years and that the decision regarding the Aquatics Center will be difficult for the community.

Commissioner Pfeiffer further reported in her decisions with Senator Albritton, noting that the Senate has not yet taken a clear position on the proposed legislation, but Senator Albritton indicated that any changes forthcoming is expected to be limited. She also stated that the House of Representatives continues to express concern that municipalities are overspending. The house is proposing that all cities conduct an exercise demonstrating how a 10% budget reduction would impact operations. If passed, Finance Director Lear will review the current budget and present potential reductions to the City Commission.

She reiterated the City's progress in implementing the "Employer of Choice" initiative, which took significant time to establish and has strengthened the City's position as a desirable workplace. Commissioner Pfeiffer expressed concern that mandated reduction exercises could undermine these achievements but clarified that the current bill only requires cities to demonstrate willingness to identify cuts, though that language may change.

She concluded by noting that she will be writing to three legislative committees regarding the enterprise fund transfer issue and sending correspondence to Senator Albritton to express her opposition to aligning with the House's position on the Property Tax Bill. She also cited Sovereign Immunity as another area under review that may have financial implications for the City, stressing that all these legislative proposals could result in major funding reductions.

Director Hargrove noted that City Manager Herr has emphasized during City Commission meetings the importance of prioritizing projects that may be more critical at this time, such as those related to Public Safety and the Fire Department. He stated that the \$3.5 million originally allocated for the Aquatics Center would not be discarded but rather redirected to the City's reserves to support higher-priority projects as needed.

Regarding the Employer of Choice initiative, Director Hargrove commented that the program has positively impacted recruitment and retention, with more individuals seeking employment with the City of Bartow and higher-quality candidates choosing to remain long-term rather than viewing the city as a temporary opportunity.

Commissioner Pfeiffer stated that the primary concern regarding the proposed pool project is not the initial construction cost but the ongoing annual operating expenses. She noted that during the previous summer, when the existing pool was open and operational, usage appeared low, with approximately twenty people observed at the facility during peak season.

Vice-Mayor Simpson noted that, at the previous meeting, the City Commission agreed to revisit the Aquatics Center discussion once the outcome of the pending legislation is known, allowing the Commission to make a more informed decision based on the bills that ultimately passed.

Board Member Bohde stated that, regardless of the outcome of the pending legislative decisions, the ongoing annual cost of approximately \$1.4 million for the Aquatics Center would remain an expense to the City with no return of those funds. He expressed that, given this financial reality, he does not see the project as a feasible option at this time.

Board Member Green inquired about how the information regarding the Aquatics Center and related budget impacts will be communicated to residents.

Director Hargrove asked for clarification as to whether Board Member Green was referring to the recommendation not to move forward with the Aquatics Center project. He stated that he would consult with City Manager Herr and Communications Director Laurie Hayes regarding how best to communicate updates to the public. He noted that if the direction is to revisit the project

following the outcome of the legislative session, a decision will be shared on the City's social media platforms.

Director Hargrove added that the city is currently awaiting legislative updates, with decisions expected by November. Once those outcomes are known, the city will have a clearer understanding of its fiscal position and next steps. He further explained that the ongoing operating costs of an Aquatic's facility are expected to increase annually and suggested that the city may explore alternative options, such as a smaller-scale facility or a redesigned aquatics project.

Board Member Green inquired whether there is still an excavation site at the Civic Center where the former pool was located.

Director Hargrove confirmed that the hole remains.

Board Member Green commented that the area is visible to individuals renting the Civic Center facility.

Commissioner Pfeiffer noted that the site is not visible to the public.

Director Hargrove clarified that the area is secured with fencing to block public view and access.

Commissioner Pfeiffer concurred that there should be continued communication with residents regarding the status of the Aquatics Center project.

Director Hargrove reported that he has been coordinating with Public Works and the design team regarding the Aquatics Center site. He stated that, should the decision be made to fill in the existing pool area and level the site, that option is feasible. However, he cautioned that if a decision is later made to construct a smaller pool at the same location, the previously placed fill material would need to be excavated again. He noted that he has obtained the cost estimate for filling in the pool.

Commissioner Ball commented that, from an aesthetic standpoint, filling in the existing pool area would be the best approach. He added that if the dirt needs to be removed for future construction, it could be repurposed elsewhere within the city, ensuring the material would not go to waste.

Commissioner Pfeiffer stated that the current fencing around the former pool site adequately conceals the area, and as such, it does not present an issue. She expressed that there is no need to undertake work that might later need to be redone.

Commissioner Ball stated that the existing pool structure should be removed.

Vice-Chairperson Young stated that if the existing pool site poses a safety concern, it should be removed.

Commissioner Pfeiffer noted that the site has posed a safety concern for the past six years; however, with the fencing now in place, the issue has been significantly reduced. She stated that she does not support spending funds to fill the area with dirt if there is a possibility that it may need to be excavated again within the next ten months.

Commissioner Ball remarked that the longer the city waits to fill in the former pool site, the higher the associated costs are likely to become.

Director Hargrove noted there would be a presentation later in the evening on the Parks, Recreation, and Cultural Arts Master Plan, which includes discussion of the Civic Center area and potential future uses for the site.

Board Member Lung suggested that the board revisit the Aquatics Center discussion after the House of Representatives finalizes decisions on the pending legislation referenced during the meeting. He noted that the previously presented Parks, Recreation, and Cultural Arts Master Plan was excellent and highlighted the Athletic Center at 555, which was proven to be a valuable investment for the city. He added that there may be opportunities to offset some costs in a similar manner, which should be considered as planning continues.

Director Hargrove emphasized the importance of considering operating duration when evaluating the Aquatics Center project. He noted that if the facility costs approximately \$6.5 million to construct and operates only seasonally for 25 weeks each year, the city must determine whether such an investment is justified for limited use. He added that there are several factors yet to be determined and that the city must remain mindful of future uncertainties before proceeding.

Board Member Bodhe noted that there had been prior reference to the City of Haines City operating a municipal pool facility.

Director Hargrove stated that the City of Haines City operates aquatic facilities at two locations, including an Aquatics Center at Lake Eva and a separate pool at another site.

Board Member Bohde asked whether operating those aquatic facilities places a strain on the City of Haines City's budget.

Director Hargrove stated that the subsidy for Haines City's Aquatics Center was under \$500,000 and noted that, while he could not speak to Haines City's overall financial situation, the city has also constructed an additional pool at another location.

Commissioner Pfeiffer stated that the Commission had visited the Lake Eva and were impressed with its design, which helped initiate the current Aquatics Center discussion. She noted that representatives from Haines City had shared lessons learned from their project, including a preference for an eight-lane pool instead of a six and avoiding the use of brick pavers. She added that Haines City's other facility is a simple recreational pool.

Director Hargrove stated that Haines City is now adding a splash pad to its aquatic facilities.

Commissioner Pfeiffer noted that Haines City has a population of approximately 40,000 residents, making it larger than the City of Bartow.

Mayor Tucker remarked that Haines City does not have as many tax-exempt properties as Bartow.

Commissioner Pfeiffer added that approximately 35% of properties in Bartow are tax-exempt.

Commissioner Longworth stated that it would be in the City's best interest to postpone any decision on the Aquatics Center until the outcome of the current legislative bill is known. He suggested that, if the fiscal environment remains unstable, the city should revisit the Aquatics Center project and at least consider developing splash pads at various locations throughout the community.

Commissioner Pfeiffer commented that the city is effectively in a holding pattern once again.

Board Member Lung noted that this context should be part of communication with residents, emphasizing that these are the types of difficult decisions the city will continue to face with future projects.

Director Hargrove stated that he anticipates Finance Director Lear's message regarding these financial considerations will be communicated to citizens sometime between now and November.

Finance Director Lear stated that the current plan is to wait for the legislature to determine which bills will pass and what measures will appear on the ballot. He noted that public communication will be distributed once more information is available. He explained that while the city is not permitted to lobby, it is allowed to educate the public and clarify the distinction between the two. He added that, when the time comes, the city will provide educational information to residents regarding the items that will appear on the ballot.

Commissioner Longworth noted that prior discussions have focused on holding town hall meetings and using all available methods to effectively share information with the public.

Finance Director Lear stated that the Florida League of Cities has developed materials and a plan that the city can use to help share information with the public. He added that the city already has some of the necessary figures but still needs to determine exactly which items must be addressed before finalizing its communications.

Commissioner Longworth emphasized the importance of communicating to residents how the proposed bills could potentially impact city operations and services.

Commissioner Pfeiffer referenced a social media post by the Winter Haven City Manager who had attempted to educate the public about fiscal matters, noting that the comments received were harshly critical and undeserved. She emphasized the challenge of communicating that the city exercises careful stewardship of funds, maintains full budget transparency online, and allocates resources responsibly, despite public skepticism toward government spending.

She highlighted that positive contributions by the city often receive insufficient recognition, citing the ongoing efforts of both the Polk County Fire Department and City of Bartow Fire Department working 24/7 to contain current wildfires. Commissioner Pfeiffer stressed that public messaging should underscore the city's demonstrated fiscal responsibility and prudent use of taxpayer dollars.

Mayor Tucker noted that the Commission is restricted in what it can communicate publicly, but Board Members are not subject to same limitations. She encouraged Board Members to help advocate on behalf of the city.

Finance Director Lear emphasized that city staff will continue to maintain budget transparency by posting the annual budget and all amendments online, as required by state statute. He noted that during the budget process, staff can educate the community about fund allocations, clarifying that decisions are not made solely by elected officials at staff direction. He stressed the importance of communicating the city's transparency, opportunities for public input, and the limited resources available for essential services.

Commissioner Longworth emphasized the importance of helping residents understand both the significance of the city services and the rationale behind funding decisions.

*Mayor Tucker left at 6:09 p.m.*

**b. Restroom Murals – Community Redevelopment Agency Director Howard Smith**

CRA Director Smith presented a proposal regarding the addition of artistic renderings to the exterior of the downtown restrooms and the facilities at Over the Branch Park. The restrooms were completed in October 2025, and the next phase involves incorporating art installations to enhance community spaces.

Director Smith emphasized that art plays a vital role in community redevelopment, as it reflects the history, culture, and identity of the area. He reiterated the CRA's mission to eliminate blight, expand affordable housing, and improve parks and recreational spaces.

During the upcoming year, the Carver Recreation Center will be integrated into the CRA district. This inclusion will enable the use of CRA funds for programming and facility enhancements. Currently, as Carver Recreation Center lies outside the district, funding has primarily supported improvements at Polk Street Community Center and Over the Branch Park.

As part of the CRA's ongoing placemaking initiatives, projects continue to include public art installations such as murals, utility box wraps, and street banners along Polk Street, MLK Avenue, and LB Brown Avenue. The proposed restroom murals are intended to celebrate community diversity, local history, and the unique character of Bartow.

Three artists were contacted to submit mural design renderings, as outlined by the joint session committee's scope of work. The submitted artwork for the Over the Branch Park restroom highlights Bartow's agricultural heritage and community identity. The proposed mural at 715 W. Polk Street (Over the Branch Park) will be displayed on the restroom's front façade and presented for review.

Director Smith clarified that he did not request immediate approval but sought feedback and input from committee members. Comments should be directed at Director Hargrove for consolidation and response.

The final artwork proposals will be reviewed by the CRA Board at its meeting on February 25, 2026, for approval. Additional mural concepts were also discussed, including a revision that would replace figures of an older gentleman and young lady with depictions of children engaged in sports, representing Bartow's "Home of Champions" theme.

Board Member Green inquired whether basketball could be included as part of the proposed mural design.

Director Hargrove confirmed that the artwork would incorporate representations of basketball, football, baseball, softball, and soccer.

Chairperson Keith questioned the removal of the older gentleman and younger lady from the current mural concept and asked if the design could be adjusted to retain or modify those elements.

CRA Director Smith noted that the available space for the mural provides a limited canvas. He emphasized the importance of maintaining appropriate scale and a clear focal point within the artwork. Director Smith explained that incorporating too many elements in a confined area may result in the images appearing too small or disproportionate. The intent is for the murals to be designed in a way that effectively reflects and showcases the community's history.

Chairperson Keith stated that she would prefer to retain the figures of the older gentleman and young lady while removing one of the youth figures. She noted that including these individuals helps present a broader range of ages within the community.

CRA Director Smith acknowledged the feedback and agreed that the artwork should represent inclusiveness within the community. He reiterated that incorporating sports imagery aligns with the city's identity as the "Home of Champions," making it an effective way to highlight local pride. Director Smith expressed appreciation for the input provided.

He introduced the upcoming project involving three proposed mural concepts for the downtown restroom located at the corner of Summerlin Street and Wilson Avenue. The artwork is planned for the rear exterior wall of the building to ensure visibility for southbound traffic on Wilson Avenue. While additional artwork may be placed along the side of the structure, the primary focus will be on the back façade.

The artwork theme for the downtown area is "*My Heart Belongs to Bartow.*" The murals are designed to be interactive, allowing visitors and residents to engage with them using their mobile devices. By scanning a barcode near the artwork, viewers can access an augmented reality feature where the image appears to come off the wall, accompanied by a narrative explaining the meaning and title of each piece.

The three murals' options have been proposed for the downtown restroom:

- A depiction of *Old Bartow*, portraying two women dressed for shopping and enjoying coffee on Main Street with the historical courthouse in the background
- A piece highlighted Bartow's agricultural history, featuring oranges, azaleas, and other local flora.
- An image of the old courthouse as a standalone focal point

In total, five renderings have been developed. The CRA intends to select and contract one of the artists by the end of the month. If budget permits, any artwork

not selected for the downtown location or Branch Park may be considered for installation at the MLK restroom site.

*(A copy of the presentation is attached therein and described as Exhibit C)*

CRA Director Smith requested that any comments regarding the presented renderings be directed at Director Hargrove, noting that this is a public meeting. He stated that he will confer with Director Hargrove regarding any feedback received.

**Audience Member Gerald Cochran, 1615 North St. Bartow**, inquired about the cost of the proposed renderings to the CRA.

CRA Director Smith responded that the total project budget is \$50,000. He explained that negotiations will take place with the selected artist once a decision is made on whom to move forward with. For a project of this scale, individual mural costs are estimated to range between \$5,000 and \$10,000.

Director Smith also noted that the artist contract requires a minimum of five years of professional experience, the use of high-quality paints, and that all artwork must be properly sealed. If completed according to these standards, the murals are expected to have a lifespan of approximately five to ten years, depending on exposure to weather and environmental conditions.

Director Hargrove presented an additional rendering option depicting children participating in different sports, which was provided by CRA Director Smith.

*(A copy of the photograph is attached therein and described as Exhibit D)*

## **Purpose of the Board**

Advise our local government on matters related to parks, programs, and facilities. Provide recommendations and being the voice for the community – letting us know what programs/activities that they would like to see, their interests. The Director always has an open-door policy.

## **7. OLD BUSINESS**

There was no old business.

## **8. NEW BUSINESS**

### **a. Catalyst Design Group – Master Plan Presentation**

Director Hargrove introduced Tim Salka and Bruce Hall from Catalyst Design Group, who is providing a presentation on the Parks Master Plan. As part of the

Master Plan process, information will be shared with the Recreation Advisory Board.

Mr. Salka provided an overview of the Parks Master Plan, outlining its process and current progress. The plan begins by identifying desired outcomes and goals, followed by discovery and design phases, leading into documentation. He noted that the kickoff project has been completed, with initial evaluations of parks facilities and discussions of potential programming already underway.

Mr. Salka explained that community engagement is a key component of the plan. A stakeholder meeting was scheduled for the evening to gather feedback on potential improvements. A dedicated website is also being developed to allow residents to review information and provide input online.

Upcoming steps include a two-day workshop with the city to explore design alternatives, develop concept drawings, and present these to the public for additional feedback. The final phase will include refining concept plans, establish budgets, and provide information to support decisions on future park projects.

Mr. Salka also described strategies for public involvement during meetings, such as group discussions, image boards, and an interactive “Red Dot/Green Dot” exercise where attendees indicate their preferences for proposed projects as well as opportunities to leave written comments.

Director Hargrove noted that the Pittas Baseball Complex operates at full capacity and lacks a suitably sized field for older players. He discussed the potential of relocating the baseball fields to the Mary Holland Parl soccer fields and moving the soccer fields to Pittas Park. This proposal would allow for the expansion of the baseball fields to accommodate older divisions.

*Mayor Tucker returned at 6:50 p.m.*

Commissioner Pfeiffer inquired whether any discussions had taken place with the baseball board members regarding the proposed changes.

Director Hargrove confirmed that discussions have taken place with the baseball board members.

Commissioner Pfeiffer asked how the baseball board members felt about the proposed relocation.

Director Hargrove stated that the baseball board members were supportive of the proposal, agreeing on the need for a senior field.

Commissioner Pfeiffer noted that the Pittas Park field has been a longstanding part of the city’s recreational facilities.

Director Hargrove stated that the name would remain Pittas Park. He noted that youth league board members change frequently, so the proposed relocation will continue to be discussed with them to ensure ongoing input. He also mentioned that the Pittas board members will participate separately from the general public meeting.

*Commissioner Longworth left at 6:63*

Mr. Salka discussed several components of the Parks Master Plan, highlighting opportunities for improvement and community engagement across multiple city facilities. He emphasized the Bartow Civic Center as a central feature of the city, noting discussions about potential renovations, possible additions, and expanding programming opportunities such as weddings, after-school activities, and summer events. Ideas included creating flexible event spaces, outdoor venues, artificial turf areas for recreation and rentals, and the potential addition of an amphitheater near the library.

Mr. Salka also reviewed opportunities at Mary Holland Park, referencing its natural beauty and existing amenities such as dog park, playground, restrooms, soccer fields, and kayak and boat launches and potential enhancements like a splash pad, pump track, kayak rentals, a skate park, and expansion of the baseball complex. These improvements could create a more active recreational destination for the community.

Additional sites discussed included the Carver Recreation Center (potential building connectivity, weather protection, and playground and field upgrades), Nye Jordan Park (restroom upgrades, resurfaced basketball courts, and playground improvements), Polk Street Community Center (proposed new playground, splash pad, and upgraded facilities), and Richland Manor Park (further enhancements to complement the new pickleball courts, including shaded areas and turf for lawn games).

Mr. Salka mentioned that future plans also include expansion considerations for Wildwood Cemetery, such as new roads, gates, and columbariums. He encouraged ongoing community feedback regarding preferred amenities, programs, and designs, noting that input will help shape future plans. Potential community programming ideas included "movies on the lawn," farmers markets, yoga class, and yard games.

Mr. Hall highlighted the effectiveness of the online platform, noting that it has been highly successful in engaging the community, with previous projects attracting significant participation. He explained that all in-person presentations and materials are also documented online for public access. Mr. Hall described the "Red Dot/Green Dot" activity as an informal method of gathering community preferences. Initial feedback from meetings and online response is used to guide modifications to proposed plans. He emphasized that the primary goal is to ensure

residents feel heard and can clearly see how their input shapes final plan, which will be ready for implementation upon completion.

*(A copy of the presentation is attached therein and described as Exhibit E)*

Commissioner Pfeiffer expressed appreciation for the presentation, noting that many possibilities and potential improvements discussed. She acknowledged recent budget discussions but emphasized the importance of maintaining a positive outlook.

Commissioner Pfeiffer observed that previous community meetings had low attendance, referencing events at Spessard Holland Elementary School and Front Page with limited resident participation. She supported the use of an online platform, suggesting that the Parks and Recreation Facebook page link directly to the project website to encourage engagement. Additionally, she mentioned the growing popularity of disc golf as a low-cost recreational activity, recommending that the city explore sponsorship opportunities to help fund an eighteen-hole course.

Mr. Ball noted that he had recently completed a similar project in Winter Haven.

Commissioner Pfeiffer commented that the pump track is very exciting and will be enjoyed by the community's youth. She inquired whether funding for the project has been included in the budget.

Director Hargrove stated that if the city receives the matching grant, funding for the project is included in the Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) for future implementation.

Mr. Ball stated that this type of discussion is exactly what they hope to encourage during the public meetings.

Commissioner Pfeiffer noted that residents frequently request a bowling alley and a movie theater.

Vice-Mayor Simpson inquired about the timeline for the start of the Master Plan.

Mr. Ball stated that the process is already underway. He noted that the team has visited parks and recreation centers and prepared a presentation outlining potential improvements. The next step is encouraging residents to visit the Parks and Recreation website for a link to the project site. He added that various methods are being considered to inform the public, including QR codes, signage in parks and along roadways, flyers, and utility bill inserts.

Commissioner Pfeiffer asked whether any parks were being considered for decommissioning, noting that the city has an abundance of park space.

Director Hargrove noted that during site visits, several parks were identified as potential candidates for decommissioning and that those areas are being reviewed.

Commissioner Pfeiffer noted that in recent years, there had been discussions about conducting an assessment of the city's parks to identify facilities that may need to be decommissioned.

Director Hargrove revisited Vice Mayor Simpson's earlier question, explaining that following the evening's meeting and the collection of feedback, the information will be incorporated into the Master Plan. He added that staff will coordinate to schedule public meetings to share updates with the community.

Commissioner Pfeiffer asked how funding would be addressed if, during community meetings, residents selected high-cost projects. She inquired about potential funding sources and how such projects would be financed.

Board Member Bohde responded that it is too early to determine funding, noting that projects must first be evaluated and vetted to establish costs before budgeting can occur.

Commissioner Pfeiffer expressed concern that if the community selects high-cost projects without available funding, residents may become disappointed.

Board Member Green remarked that the city previously went through a similar process with the aquatics center. She explained that this phase will serve primarily as a questionnaire to gauge community preferences among various options.

Director Hargrove acknowledged the importance of identifying funding sources and stated that he plans to discuss the matter with City Manager Herr and Finance Director Lear. He explained that the Master Plan is a long-term initiative, potentially spanning ten years, with opportunities to begin by incorporating smaller projects into the Capital Improvement Plan (CIP). He added that the larger projects may need to be completed in phases and that future sponsorship opportunities, including naming rights, could also help support funding.

Mr. Ball noted that the benefit of a Master Plan is the ability to identify the city's long-term potential and strategically work toward achieving it.

Board Member Bohde expressed appreciation for the development of the Master Plan, acknowledging that funding limitations mean implementation will occur gradually. He noted that city parks had previously been in poor condition but commended the efforts of the City Manager and staff for their dedication to improvement. He emphasized the importance of investing in personnel to properly maintain upgraded facilities.

Board Member Bohde stated that the city is making positive progress and praised the initiative as a step forward. He also observed that community participation can be challenging, citing low election turnout, but said he is encouraged by the addition of the outline platform to engage residents.

Mr. Ball stated that there have been discussions about conducting a needs assessment to evaluate community demographics and population trends. He explained that the assessment would identify existing facilities and determine which amenities are lacking for a community of this size.

Chairperson Keith acknowledged the value of online engagement but emphasized that a significant portion of the community does not regularly use the internet. She noted that word of mouth and outreach through churches and community organizations remain key methods of communication. She added that while online tools are useful, traditional methods such as handouts and personal contact are often more effective given the busy nature of modern life.

Mr. Ball noted that additional components of the agreement include conducting a community survey.

Vice-Chairperson Young expressed support for the approach of involving citizens in the planning process, noting that it provides residents with an opportunity to give input even if they are unable to attend meetings. He added that this inclusiveness helps ensure transparency in decision-making. He also asked what factors have changed to make relocating a baseball field to Mary Holland Park feasible, given that the area was previously considered unsuitable for soccer fields due to wet conditions.

Director Hargrove stated that if a new complex were to be developed at Mary Holland Park, site work and surveying would be conducted to identify and address any underlying issues.

Vice-Chairperson Young noted that the site work had already been completed.

Director Hargrove explained that the project would identify existing problem areas and outline potential solutions. He added that if new baseball fields were to be constructed at the site, previous issues and discussions related to the location would be reviewed as part of the planning process.

Asst. Director Lasek noted that adjustments to the earthwork and grading would correct the slope issues, eliminating the previous problems at the site.

Vice-Chairperson Young remarked that the site evaluation should have been completed before relocating the soccer fields to their current location. He expressed concern that significant funds were spent developing the fields, which are now underutilized.

Director Hargrove stated that the soccer fields are frequently used. He acknowledged that some flooding issues remain but noted that many problems have been addressed, including the repair of underground leaks and damaged irrigation pipes and heads.

**Audience Member Gerald Cochran** asked whether the Commission had already approved the Master Plan and whether it represented a single comprehensive plan. He expressed concern that no bids or specific funding details were mentioned in the presentation and questioned how budget expenditures were being monitored. Mr. Cochran stated that many residents do not support allocating large sums to a single area and suggested that other parts of Bartow also require financial attention beyond the Parks and Recreation Master Plan.

Director Hargrove explained that the City Commission had authorized moving forward with the Parks and Recreation Master Plan, which serves as a single comprehensive plan for the department. He clarified that there was no separate bid for the project, as Catalyst Design Group holds a continuing contract with the city to complete the plan. He added that funding for the project was included in the approved city budget, and the allocated amount was designated specifically for the development of the Parks and Recreation Master Plan.

Director Hargrove reported that the Recreation Trail Program Grant application for the Story Trail project, extending from the library to Mary Holland Park, has been temporarily placed on hold. The \$450,000 grant was under review by a new operations manager who has paused the program. He noted that the city is hopeful the program will resume soon, and when it does, the city will have ninety days to complete the required documentation. He stated that he will provide an update and possible updated presentation once further information is available.

## **9. ADVISORY BOARD COMMENTS**

### **a. Bill Bohde**

Board Member Bohde commented that communication with residents is not solely the responsibility of the City Commission or Board Members. He noted that the city has a communications director and emphasized that challenges with community engagement are common across municipalities. He stated that residents who wish to be involved will seek out opportunities to stay informed and encouraged relying on the Communications Director to share information through multiple channels, not just social media.

He expressed appreciation to Director Hargrove and Assistant Director Lasek for their efforts and thanked the Commissioners for hiring City Manager Herr, noting that his leadership has been a great addition to the city. He acknowledged that all

projects require funding and emphasized the importance of engaging the community in prioritizing initiatives outlined in the Master Plan.

**b. Leslie Green**

Board Member Green referred to Commissioner Pfeiffer’s earlier comments regarding the meetings held at Spessard Holland Elementary School and Front Page, noting that she had not been aware of those events. She suggested exploring additional methods of communication to better inform the public about future meetings.

Mayor Tucker stated that flyers and social media posts were distributed to promote both meetings; however, attendance from the public remained low.

Commissioner Pfeiffer noted that 900 door hangers were distributed to residents in the E.F. Griffin Road area to promote the meeting held at Spessard Holland Elementary School.

Vice-Mayor Simpson explained that the meeting was open to all residents but was specifically intended to reach new residents in the area and inform them about city services. She added that the event was promoted on social media.

Mayor Tucker stated that Communications Director Hayes maintains an email distribution list that send the “Week in Review” and other important city updates. She noted that the city is exploring all possible methods to share information with residents. While mailing letters to all households would create a significant financial burden, staff continue to seek effective and affordable ways to engage the community.

Commissioner Pfeiffer noted that community meetings are promoted through multiple channels, including Main Street distribution, the City’s communication network, the Chamber of Commerce, and individual Commissioners. She suggested that Communications Director Hayes consider boosting some of the posts to increase public visibility and engagement.

Board Member Green emphasized the importance of effective communication regarding the Aquatics Center project, noting that residents often only attend meetings when dissatisfied. She commended the renovations completed at Richland Manor Park but observed that public feedback focused primarily on the Aquatics Center rather than acknowledging recent improvements. She concluded by stating that while it is impossible to please everyone, consistent and transparent communication remains essential.

Vice-Mayor Simpson suggested creating a video explanation to inform residents why the Aquatics Center project is not currently feasible. She noted that a video

would help provide citizens with full context and a clearer understanding of the situation.

Board Member Green noted that Bartow Middle School and Bartow High School frequently host sporting events throughout the year and suggested using those venues to share information about upcoming city events. She recommended placing a poster board with a QR code that residents could scan to access city updates and event details.

Commissioner Pfeiffer noted that this is where Communications Director Hayes plays a key role, adding that she manages far more responsibilities than most residents realize.

Chairperson Keith commented that the city is hosting several major events, noting that these occasions provide an excellent opportunity to share information with the public.

Board Member Green complimented Director Hargrove, Assistant Director Lasek, and their staff for the excellent work they do. She stated that since joining the recreation board, she has been impressed by their efforts and the many projects they plan to bring to Bartow.

**c. Sheila Keith**

Chairperson Keith agreed that Director Hargrove and Assistant Director Hargrove Lasek are doing an excellent job and expressed appreciation for their continued open-door policy. She noted that each board member contributes an important perspective from different areas of the city and thanked the commissioners for their support and the opportunity to serve.

**d. Troy Lung**

Board Member Lung acknowledged the current uncertainties from legislative and budgetary perspectives but emphasized the importance of continued planning for the future. He noted that even small progress over time is valuable. He commended the commission for its strong presence and dedication, expressing a wish for greater community involvement, through recognizing that participation is beyond his control. He concluded by thanking Director Hargrove and Assistant Director Lasek for their forward-looking leadership within the Parks and Recreation Department.

**e. Carver Young**

Vice-Chairperson Young requested that the gates at the Carver Recreation Center remain closed after an alligator was found on the premises the previous day. He also thanked Director Hargrove and Assistant Director Lasek for a job well done.

## **10. CITY COMMISSION COMMENTS**

### **a. Mayor Tucker**

Mayor Tucker commented that a great deal of valuable information was shared during the meeting and said the comments would be relayed to Communications Director Hayes. She agreed that those who wish to be involved will take part and thanked everyone for attending and contributing. She also conveyed that Commissioner Longworth extends his appreciation to the Parks and Recreation Board for their service.

### **b. Vice Mayor Simpson**

Vice Mayor Simpson thanked the Parks and Recreation Board for their service, collaboration, and continued support of the Parks, Recreation, and Cultural Arts team.

### **c. Commissioner Ball**

Commissioner Ball expressed disappointment with the lack of community response regarding elections, city commission meetings, and board meetings, noting that the city does its best to engage residents. He commended Director Hargrove and Assistant Director Lasek for their efforts, stating that they have brought forward some of the most impressive projects seen in many years.

### **d. Commissioner Longworth**

Commissioner Longworth was absent.

### **e. Commissioner Pfeiffer**

Commissioner Pfeiffer reported that a resident expressed concern about Wildwood Cemetery remaining accessible at night, noting that people often enter the area with loud vehicles and bright lights that disturb nearby homes. She asked whether installing gates to close the cemetery during nighttime hours would be a viable safety measure.

Director Hargrove reported that he has obtained pricing for gates at the two cemetery entrances. Although the project was not included in the current budget, he stated it could be added to the upcoming fiscal year's budget. He noted that even with gates installed, access would still be possible through the 555 entrances, and fully securing the site would require exploring a fencing project on the west side of the facility.

Commissioner Pfeiffer asked whether the fence on the west side of the facility was down.

Director Hargrove stated that there has never been a fence on the west side of the facility. He reported that staff have been instructed to post signage reading “No Vehicle Traffic Beyond This Point” and to add “Dawn to Dusk” signs as well. Commissioner Pfeiffer expressed appreciation for the evening’s discussion, noting that it was valuable and informative. She said it is beneficial to hear about the various efforts being made across the city and stated she would be supportive of holding this joint meeting twice a year.

**11. NEXT MEETING – March 11, 2026**

Chairperson Keith announced the next meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, March 11, 2026, at 5:30 p.m.

**12. ADJOURNMENT**

Chairperson Keith adjourned the meeting at 7:36 p.m.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Chairperson Shelia Keith

\_\_\_\_\_  
Mayor Tanya Tucker

ATTEST:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Asst. City Clerk Kaylee Fussell

\_\_\_\_\_  
City Clerk Jacqueline Poole

(SEAL)



# Legacy Brick Pathway

---

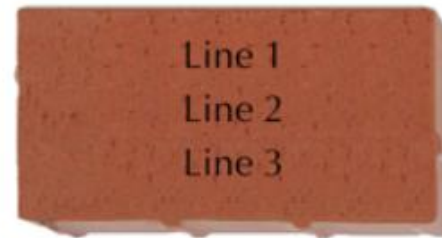
## Order process

1. Orders may be submitted online or in person
2. Participants provide their own requested engraving at the time of submission
3. Within 24–48 hours, staff will contact the purchaser to:  
Review and confirm engraving details for accuracy and compliance  
Finalize and securely collect payment

## Choose Your Products

### 4x8 Brick

\$100



3 lines personalized text  
Up to 20 characters per line

Quantity



1 x 3 Mini Replica (\$40 each)

### 4x8 Brick

\$125



3 lines personalized text  
Up to 12 characters per line

Quantity



1 x 3 Mini Replica (\$40 each)

# Demand Strategy

---

The program operates on a structured 8-month cycle:

- 4 months open for order collection
- 4 months closed to build demand and prepare production

This phased approach:

- Encourages timely participation
- Creates sustained community interest
- Allows for efficient batching of orders and cost-effective production



# Cost & Revenue

*Phase 1 has the potential to generate over \$200,000 in net revenue while enhancing a permanent community feature.*

## **Pricing Structure:**

- Text-Only Brick: **\$100**
- Text + Logo Brick: **\$125**
- Mini Replica Brick (add-on): **\$40**

## **Capacity (Phase 1):**

- Total available bricks: **2,736**

## **Projected Phase 1 Revenue w/o installation & brick cost:**

- Full capacity revenue: **\$273,600** (at \$100 for base pricing)

## **Cost Per Unit/Brick:**

- Production cost per brick: **\$8**

## **Projected Phase 1 Installation Cost:**

- \$12-\$15/sq ft at 530 sq ft = **\$7,950**

## **Return on Investment:**

2,736 Bricks x \$100 = \$273,600

Cost per unit/Brick = 2,736 x \$8 = \$21,888

Installation Cost: \$15 x 530 Sq. Ft = \$7,950

Total Possible Revenue: \$263,462



# Questions?

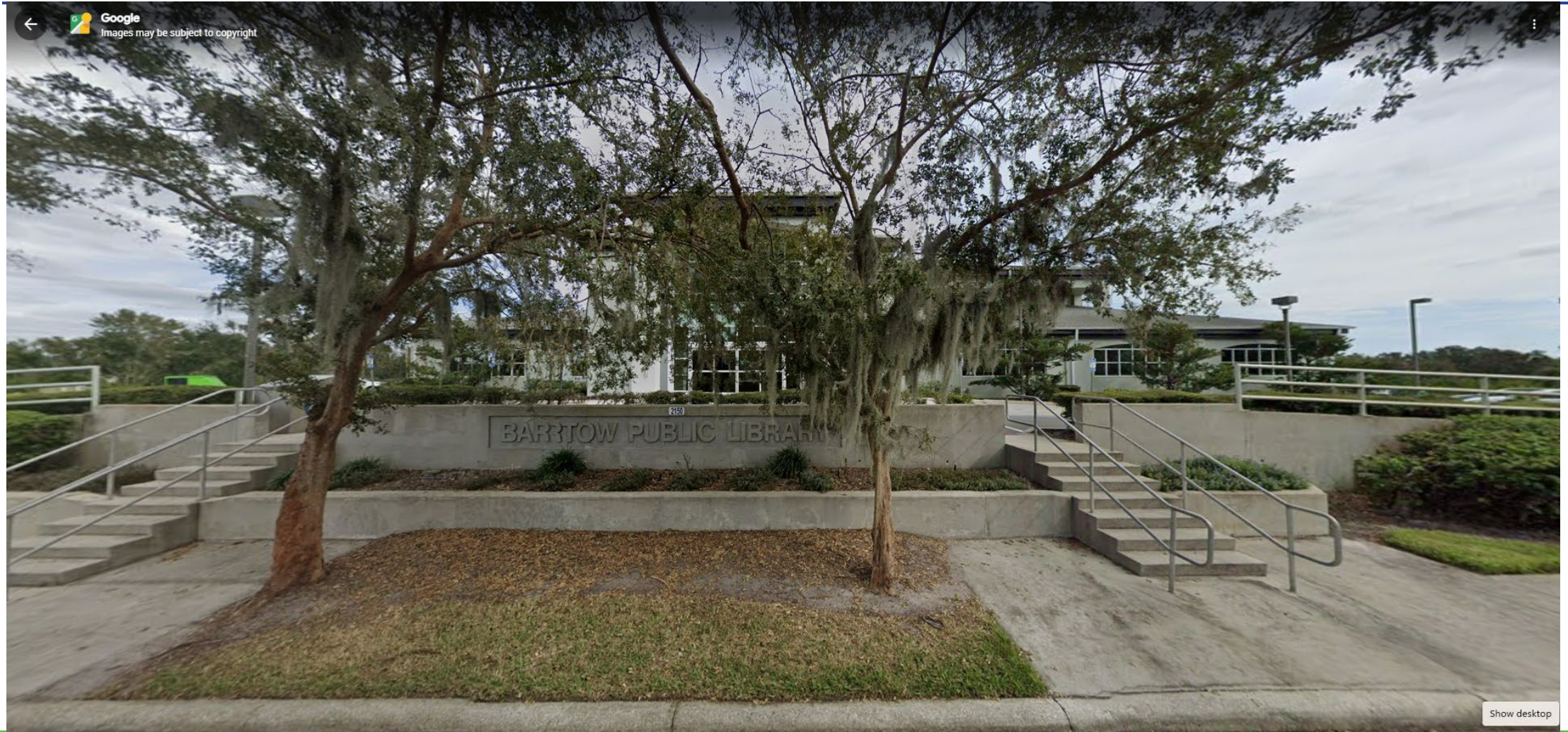
---

# LIBRARY MURAL PROJECT



**City of Bartow**

# BEFORE



**AFTER**

**BARTOW PUBLIC LIBRARY**





**AFTER**

