

LEGISLATIVE #

090737A



Planning and Development Services

Memo

To: Community Development Committee
From: D. Henrichs
CC: Erik Bredfeldt
Date: 8/22/2011
Re: Historic Preservation Issues

This is an overview and update of the downtown and historic neighborhoods in relationship to the City's historic preservation program. The first subjects (referral topics) are directly related to the referral; the remaining subjects are supplemental for the Committee's information.

Referral Topics

Historic District or Main Street program for Gainesville's Downtown commercial district

Historic Preservation Element

Policy 1.4.1 The City shall identify commercial areas in Gainesville appropriate for designation as a "Florida Main Street" community.

The Main Street Four-Point Approach®

For the longest time, we all waited for a white knight to ride into town and fix the problem. But the Main Street people made us realize that the only way to get it done right was to do it ourselves."
Russell Thomas, mayor of Americus, Georgia

As a unique economic development tool, the Main Street Four-Point Approach® is the foundation for local initiatives to revitalize their districts by leveraging local assets—from cultural or architectural heritage to local enterprises and community pride.

The four points of the Main Street approach work together to build a sustainable and complete community revitalization effort.

1. Organization establishes consensus and cooperation by building partnerships among the various groups that have a stake in the commercial district.
2. Promotion takes many forms, but the goal is to create a positive image that will rekindle community pride and improve consumer and investor confidence in your commercial district.

3. Design means getting Main Street into top physical shape and creating a safe, inviting environment for shoppers, workers, and visitors.
4. Economic restructuring strengthens your community's existing economic assets while diversifying its economic base.

Golf View Neighborhood

The history of the Golf View neighborhood is a story of Gainesville's growth and prosperity. The neighborhood developed in response to the expansion of the University of Florida. The creation, quick successes, and dissolution of the Golf View Realty Company typify speculation during the "Florida Land Boom". The picturesque homes found in Golf View illustrate suburban development and "dream houses" from the 1930-1940s. Thirty-six principle structures were built in the 1950s. Currently, there are 73 buildings out of 84 in the Golf View neighborhood that are over 60 year old.

Staff and Historic Preservation Board members attended the Golf View's Semi-Annual neighborhood meeting on Saturday, October 23, 2010. Staff and board members presented historic district information and answered questions in a casual setting of a covered dish meeting. At a follow-up meeting on May 1, 2011, the Golf View neighborhood heard a presentation by Roy Hunt and unanimously voted to not consider the neighborhood for historic district nomination.

5th Avenue Neighborhood

The Northwest Fifth Avenue Historic Structure Survey was completed in 2007 by Jennifer L.F. Nash.

The following is a summary of measures and recommendations that can be implemented in the 5th Avenue neighborhood. There are enough sufficient buildings to create a local historic district. It would require additional evaluation to determine boundaries and the nomination process in the Land Development Code 30-112.

"Suggestions concerning significant buildings, resource groups, and a historic district follow. Four resource groups were identified during the NW 5th Avenue historic survey. The resource groups include a section of railroad and its associated depot (AL05393), an African Methodist Episcopal (AME) church complex (AL05395), the historic Lincoln High School (AL05394), and a commerce center (AL05396).

Nine individual structures are potentially eligible for listing in the NRHP (AL05320, AL05329, AL01036, AL05361, AL05375, AL05369, AL00989, AL00586, and AL00553). Additionally, the NW 5th Avenue neighborhood appears to have sufficient cultural resources (256) that would contribute to the creation of the NW 5th Avenue Historic District."

University-related neighborhood - Hibiscus Park, Palm Terrace, Annis Terrace and University Park

The neighborhoods west of College Court and Hilldale are architecturally heterogeneous ranging from concentrations of 1920s architecture to ranch designs built in the 1940s. Annis Terrace, which sits astride NW 25th Street, was included in the surveyed neighborhoods because it is completely comprised of houses constructed immediately after the end of World War II.

Of the remaining subdivisions, only Palm Terrace has contributing buildings that comprise more than 50% of the total number of buildings in each subdivision based on the survey completed in 1995. Collectively considered as a potential historic district, no more than 49% of the buildings in the Hibiscus Park, Palm Terrace, and University Park subdivisions are considered contributing. Even removing University Park with its 15 noncontributing from the proposed district does not alter the percentage of contributing and noncontributing buildings. Using 1961 as the cutoff construction date for a contributing structure, however, may involve revising the status of upwards of 70 structures that certainly would favorably alter the historic district eligibility of these neighborhoods.

Supplemental Information

Civil War Downtown - Sidewalk bronze plaques

One of the components of a Main Street approach is promotion of businesses and encouraging heritage tourism. Cultural heritage tourism is described as traveling to experience the places, artifacts and activities that authentically represent the stories and people of the past and present. It includes cultural, historic and natural resources. Plaques statistically imbedded in Downtown and Depot Park sidewalks describing the Battle of Gainesville would convey Civil War history to pedestrians and lead them to the next interpretive site. This could expand and continue the concept of the cell phone tour.

Chert Structures

Gainesville has one of the highest concentrations of fieldstone buildings in the North Florida region. Although found in small quantities in locations such as Ocala, Yankeetown, in the Panhandle, and areas in Sumter County, fieldstone buildings are a signature style for Gainesville and perhaps represent our most distinctive vernacular architectural offering in the State of Florida.

The buildings, which are near 150 in number, are part and parcel of some of the City's most historic neighborhoods. Their construction in the late 1910s and 1920s coincides with the development of picturesque subdivisions throughout the City. As such, they have become integral and distinctive parts of the Northeast Residential Historic District and the subdivisions which surround the University of Florida, such as College Park, University Heights and University Park, Golfview Estates, and Hibiscus Park. In addition, they can be found in other neighborhoods which began developing in the period before the Second World War II.

This impressive collection has completed Florida Master Site File forms by staff and is ready for evaluation and history as a thematic historic district. The next step would be the local nomination process.

Grove Street Neighborhood

Staff has attended two neighborhood meetings, one on June 30, 2011 and the other a month later, on July 28, 2011. An overview of the process of becoming a historic district was presented by staff at the first meeting. The follow-up meeting was more specific and focused toward the neighbors doing some of the survey work of the individual buildings and filling out the Florida Master Site File forms. Staff will continue to be available to answer questions and give guidance with their goals.

Northeast & Southeast Expansion

The buildings adjacent to the Northeast Residential Historic District & Southeast Gainesville Historic District should be surveyed to determine inclusion into the respective districts.

In conclusion, it has been over thirty years since the City of Gainesville has done a cultural resource survey to development a heritage plan for the entire City.

Historic Districts or Conservation Districts

What is a local historic district?

"Local historic districts are areas in which historic buildings and their settings are protected by public review. Historic district ordinances are local laws that are adopted by communities using powers granted by the state. Historic districts comprise the city's significant historic and

architectural resources. Inclusion in a historic district signifies that a property contributes to an ensemble that is worth protecting by virtue of its historic importance or architectural quality..."
City of Cambridge, Massachusetts.

Conservation districts, generally established as a zoning overlay, protect character-defining streetscapes in older areas through the regulation of changes to height, bulk, and mass of individual buildings. As with historic districts, conservation districts have preservation or conservation as their primary goals. However, the focus is on preserving the area's traditional character rather than historic fabric. The City does not have enabling code for conservation districts; however it could be included into the anticipated update of the historic preservation section of the Land Development Code.

Conservation Districts

There are other options of preservation protection that are available besides nominating an area as a historic district. Generally, conservation districts can be divided into two categories, "historic district-lite" and zoning/land use.

The "historic district-lite" conservation districts often have nomination criteria and design guidelines that are borrowed from the National Register nomination process and the Secretary of Interior's Standard and Guidelines. Nominations can be initiated by neighborhood organizations facing development blight/usage-change threats.

The conservation districts that regulate change through zoning are typically concerned with preventing wholesale demolition of properties, preserving the use character of a neighborhood and maintaining a certain scale of allowable construction. This is sometime accompanied by a design overlay.