

**Recommendations to Gainesville's Historic Preservation Program and
Revisions to Ordinances in the Land Development Code**

Gainesville Modern, Task Force Meeting, March 15, 2019

Participants:

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Recommendations:

1) A Full-time Historic Preservation Planner

The historic preservation planner position has not been full-time with a 100% focus on planning in over a decade, at least. Most recently, it has been reduced to a part-time position, paying qualified graduate students a non-professional rate at the lowest end of the Planner I pay scale. Enlisting a part-time preservation planner only supports the maintenance of the current preservation program, which entails reviewing Certificate of Appropriateness applications for the five historic districts.

We recommend the City Commission approve a budget for a full-time professional preservation planner, with a pay scale of at least a Planner II professional salary, and that the position be 100% focused on preservation. This planner should have a degree in architecture and/or preservation, and have experience in preservation planning and advocacy. A full-time position will support proactive historic preservation activities, such as survey, nominations to individual designations, historic districts and heritage districts, applications for grants, work on preservation and economic development, partnerships with City organizations, cultural tourism promotion, community outreach, education for realtors, homeowners, municipal staff, community board members and the City Commission. The historic preservation planner should be the liaison with the Historic Preservation Board and with the community and property owners. In addition, with the requirement for architectural education and training, the preservation planner could also be an advisory position for the planning staff in their reviews of projects and developments that affect Gainesville's built heritage.

With a full-time Historic Preservation Planner, the City could develop and implement multiple proactive programs, including the following recommended actions:

2) Ordinance Revision: Demolition Delay

The existing ordinance for a 90-day demolition delay requires a building to be 45 years of age and/or have a Florida Master Site File. We recommend a change to 35 years of age. The Gainesville Modern Survey (1935-1975) specifically covered buildings that are over 40 years of age (1979 and earlier) and also identified buildings built in the early 1980s that are significant to Gainesville's historical, cultural and architectural heritage. As the purpose of this section of the ordinance is to provide time for the Historic Preservation Board and Staff to assess the significance of a building, make arrangements for documentation and potential re-use or re-

location, it must allow for the widest range of age and significance possible. Additionally, the demolition delay ordinance is currently located in Section 6.19 of the Building Code; this should be referenced or duplicated under the Historic Preservation Ordinances for ease of use.

< http://gainesville-fl.elaws.us/code/coor_ptii_ch6_artii_sec6-19 >

3) Ordinance Revision: Section 30-4.28 Section C.2 Local Register of Historic Places Process

The existing ordinance is unclear about the process for designation. We recommend that the ordinance be assessed by legal and preservation experts and be re-written to include specific instructions for nomination of a building and district to the local register, the development of a standardized City of Gainesville designation form, and a clear flowchart that delineates timeline for City Board reviews and City Commission approval.

Additionally, the ordinance notes: "The City Manager or designee shall issue an official certificate of historic significance to the owner of properties listed individually on the local register or judged as contributing to the character of a district listed on the local register. The City Manager or designee is additionally authorized to issue and place official signs denoting the geographic boundaries of each district listed on the local register." There is currently no certificate or signage system in place for the City, which is problematic as many developers and potential buyers claim ignorance of being in a historic district. We recommend a standard certificate and signage system be developed and a Department of Historic Resources grant be applied for and used for fabrication and installation.

4) Develop more designations of Heritage Overlay Districts and Individual Landmarks

Gainesville has many civic, institutional, religious and commercial buildings eligible for individual designation, and many neighborhoods that are eligible for the protections of a Heritage Overlay District (Land Development Code Sec. 30-4.27). This district type was created for residential areas with visual characteristics that have a distinct identity and encourages the use of existing buildings, allows for complementary infill development and protects neighborhoods' distinct identities. Heritage Overlay Districts are less stringent than Historic Preservation Districts, but still require design standards review, which could be performed by the existing Historic Preservation Board. There are currently no Heritage Overlay Districts in Gainesville.

The Historic Preservation Planner could use the recent Gainesville Mid-Century Survey as the basis for developing nominations for neighborhoods and individual buildings.

5) Promote appropriate preservation, reuse and new development of commercial areas

As Gainesville's historic districts are mostly residential, there is a lack of focus on commercial properties throughout the city, including the historic downtown core and local neighborhood Main Streets, such as in 5th Avenue and Pleasant Street. We recommend a preservation and redevelopment master plan be developed for these areas, in order to guide new businesses and development. The plan should make use of existing surveys and assessments of significance, which exist in the City's Historic Preservation office.

We recommend promoting existing financial incentives for historic commercial redevelopment as a means of attracting good development and creative re-use and design. Through the National Park Service and Florida Division of Historical Resources, a 20% tax credit is available to certified rehabilitation of historic, income-producing buildings.

<<https://www.nps.gov/tps/tax-incentives.htm>>

We recommend that the City develop funding for exterior maintenance and rehabilitation projects on historic non-residential buildings. The City has previously appropriated \$20,000 to created the Pleasant Street Rehabilitation Fund, which offered matching fund assistance on properties in Pleasant Street that had an exterior violation. Due to restrictions on the fund and lack of a full-time Historic Preservation Planner to promote its use, only one homeowner was granted funding. There are numerous models of funding, grants and revolving funds available for development of funding for commercial structure projects.

We recommend that the City apply for Main Street designation for its commercial core and adjacent local Main Streets. The Main Street Program offers technical assistance for revitalization and economic development of historic commercial areas. Further, Main Street cities are eligible for free program assistance and grant funding.

<<https://dos.myflorida.com/historical/preservation/florida-main-street/>>

6) Better Partnerships and Collaboration, Community Involvement, Transparency

We recommend:

- better coordination and partnership with the CRA, with a focus on historic areas within the CRA funding districts.
- the creation of a new partnership with *Visit Gainesville!* to promote cultural and architectural tourism.
- Development of programs that educate and involve the community in Gainesville's architectural heritage, including lectures, exhibits, walking tours, homeowner workshops on maintenance and repair
- Updated website to include easily accessible FMSF forms, historic district designations, historic photos, information on the designation and review process, clear notification of current COA and demolition applications. This information is critical not only for building owners, but for realtors and potential out-of-town buyers.