

City of Fernandina Beach

Reconnaissance-Level Architectural Survey

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Final Report
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The City of Fernandina Beach received a survey and planning grant from the Florida Bureau of Historic Preservation, Division of Historical Resources to conduct a reconnaissance-level architectural survey of the entire City limits, minus the Downtown Historic District and the Old Town Historic District. The goal of the reconnaissance level survey is to identify other areas of the City which are potentially eligible for preservation as either historic or conservation districts, and direct the need for additional more intensive survey work. In addition to identifying potentially historic neighborhoods, the survey is intended to identify development patterns, history of neighborhoods, and architectural and landscape elements which create a neighborhood's particular character, as well as result in the development of Neighborhood Planning Areas. Landscape evaluation included documentation of both natural landscaping levels and identification of manicured, formal landscaping. Neighborhood Planning Areas are defined by clear geographic boundaries which delineate a neighborhood from the surrounding area, and there is not necessarily a historical imperative for the boundaries or unified developmental history. Based on the clear goals of the project coupled with the recent 2007 historic resources survey, it was determined by the City of Fernandina Beach that the preparation of Florida Master Site File forms would not be completed as part of the project.

This survey complies with Chapter 1A-46 (*Archaeological and Historical Report Standards*), *Florida Administrative Code*. This historic resources survey was conducted under the supervision of Amy Groover Streelman, M.H.P.

The Fernandina Beach Reconnaissance Survey is the result of the identification and evaluation of concentrations of historic resources in the community. Within this report, concentrations of historic resources are identified and evaluated, and suggestions and recommendations are offered to insure the resources are recognized and protected for current and future use. Fernandina Beach's extant historic resources enhance the quality of life for those who live and work in the area, and they help to establish a unique sense of place. Without an understanding and appreciation for those historic resources, the Fernandina Beach community and the City of Fernandina Beach would lose an integral aspect of its identity.

Six Neighborhood Planning Areas were identified during this survey: North of the Downtown Historic District, South of the Downtown Historic District, the Southside Neighborhood, the area North and South of Atlantic Avenue (east of 14th Street), the Beach North of Atlantic Avenue, and the Beach South of Atlantic Avenue. Potential conservation districts were identified within three of the Neighborhood Planning Areas: North of the Downtown Historic District, South of the Downtown Historic District, and Southside. Representative photographs within each of the Neighborhood Planning Areas and analysis of their character defining features are included within the report. The reconnaissance survey did not find the potential for additional historic districts due to the lack of cohesive historic development and concentrations of historic resources, and alterations to many of the extant historic structures throughout the identified neighborhoods.

Recommendations

This historic resources reconnaissance survey contributes to the preservation of the historic resources within the City of Fernandina Beach. The results of the survey are intended to help educate property owners, surrounding communities, City staff, and municipal officials about the valuable historic resources within the City. A summary of the suggested measures the City can apply towards the preservation of the Neighborhood Planning Areas is included below.

- This survey work has revealed there is potential for conservation districts within the North of the Downtown Historic District, South of the Downtown Historic District, and Southside Neighborhood Planning Areas. Various potential boundaries and regulations for these conservation districts are detailed within the report. It is recommended that the City solicit community input throughout the comprehensive planning process, to build consensus and determine the best boundaries and regulations for a conservation district within each Neighborhood Planning Area.
- As this project included only a reconnaissance level survey, the documentation of individual structures within the Neighborhood Planning Areas was not conducted. It is recommended that additional field surveys be conducted within the boundaries illustrated on Figure 201. The first priorities for field survey are the Beach North of Atlantic Avenue and Beach South of Atlantic Avenue Neighborhood Planning Areas, due to the high level of alteration and demolition which has occurred. The next priority for field survey is the North and South of Atlantic Avenue Neighborhood Planning Area. While this area does not contain a potential historic district, due to lack of cohesion and many non-historic structures, it contains many structures which could be individually eligible for local historic designation or listing in the National Register. The final priority for field survey are the portions of the South of the Downtown Historic District and Southside Neighborhood Planning Areas which were not included as part of the 2007 survey by Bland and Associates, Inc. These are of lowest priority, as the majority of the historic resources in each neighborhood were documented during the 2007 survey. It should be noted that the boundaries for future survey work within the Southside neighborhood, as indicated on Figure 201, are based on the GIS data available from the FMSF regarding the 2007 survey boundaries, which differ from the boundaries shown within the report. Future survey work within the Southside neighborhood should include the entirety of the Neighborhood Planning Area which was not documented during the 2007 survey. A complete list of the historic buildings within the identified Neighborhood Planning Areas, which have not been previously documented on FMSF forms, is included in Appendix C.
- Due to the high level of alterations and new construction within the Beach North of Atlantic Avenue and Beach South of Atlantic Avenue Neighborhood Planning Areas, little currently remains which retains a high level of historic integrity. It is recommended that a historical research project be undertaken to more extensively document the history of the beach and raise awareness of its past. This should include an intensive review of local newspaper archives, materials at the Amelia Island Museum of History, and an oral history project. This project could be presented to the public in various formats including

an exhibit at the Amelia Island Museum of History, an online exhibit, a book, or a local history tour noting the remaining significant resources.

- Electronic GIS mapping data with boundaries of the Neighborhood Planning Areas, potential conservation districts, and recommendations for future survey have been included with this report. This data can be used by residents and City staff throughout the comprehensive planning process.