

Chapter 5: SOUTHSIDE NEIGHBORHOOD PLANNING AREA ANALYSIS

The Southside Neighborhood Planning Area is roughly bounded by S 9th Street at the west, Beech Street at the north, S 14th Street at the east, and Lime street at the south, as illustrated on Figure 58. Included below is a summary of the Neighborhood Planning Area's predominant character defining features, and an entire list of character defining features is included later in this section of the report.

- *Land Use* - The Neighborhood Planning Area is one of the few identified that incorporates land uses other than residential. One of the unique features of the neighborhood is the number of churches located within it. It also contains two schools and a community center.
- *Height/Stories* – The Neighborhood Planning Area contains almost entirely one story residences. Those which are two stories are typically located along Beech Street, or are non-historic.
- *Architectural Styles* – The Neighborhood Planning Area contains primarily modest residences constructed in vernacular styles. As previously discussed, the shotgun house form has become rare today, due to demolition, and some examples still remain within the Neighborhood Planning Area.

History and Development Patterns

The development patterns of the historic resources in the Southside Neighborhood are illustrated in Table 4. The six historic periods established during the survey reflect the developmental history of the area. These patterns of development also provide the contexts necessary for determining the significance of the various historic resources.

Table 4: Development Patterns of Resources within the Southside Neighborhood Planning Area

Periods of Development	Number of Parcels
Spanish-American War Period/Turn-of-the-Century (1898-1916)	13
World War I and Aftermath Period (1917-1919)	0
Florida Land Boom Period (1920-1929)	16
Depression and New Deal Period (1930-1940)	52
World War II and Post-War Period (1941-1949)	33
Modern Period (1950-1961)	113
Non-Historic (Post 1961)	300

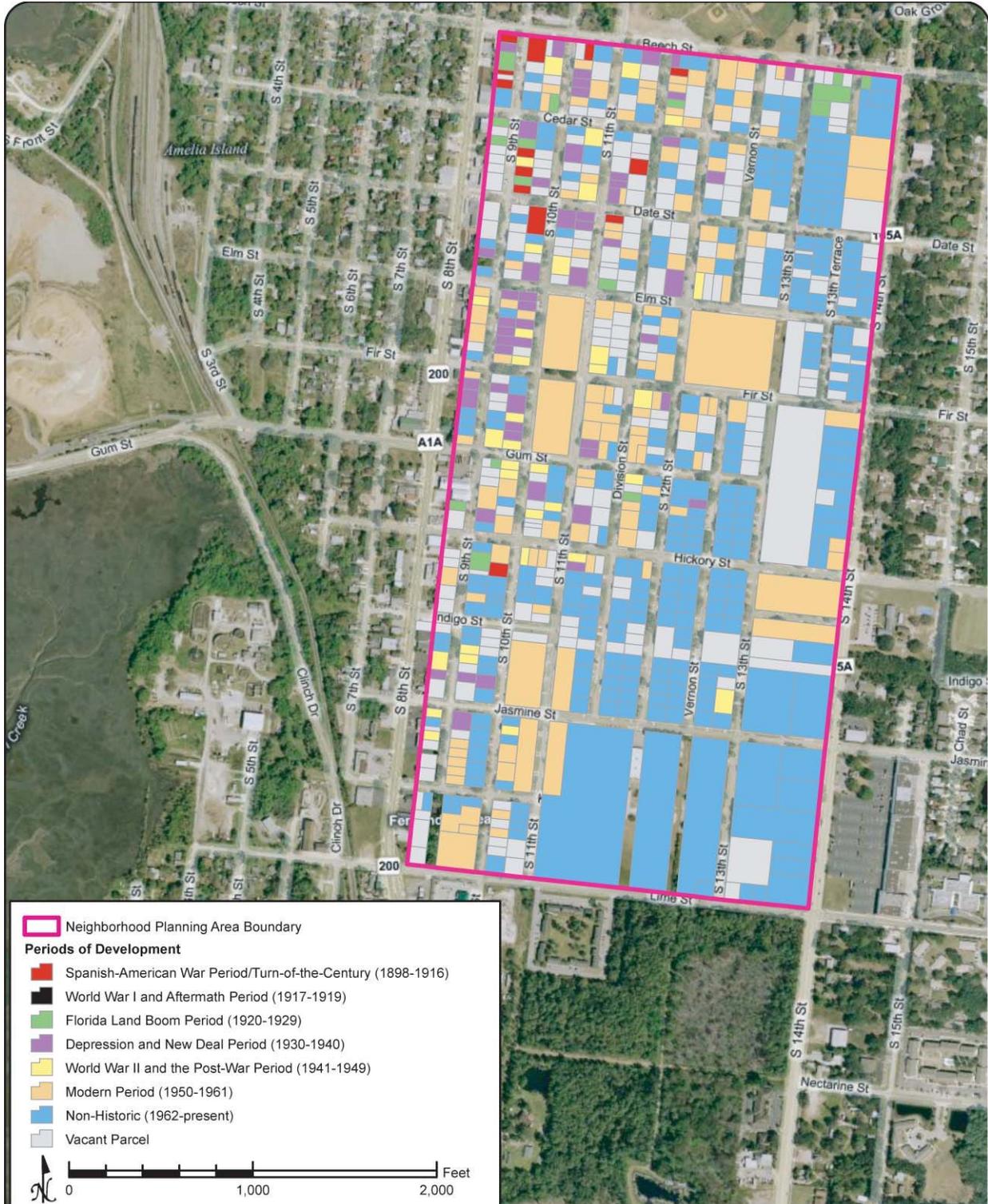


Figure 58: Development Patterns in the Southside Neighborhood Planning Area



While Fernandina Beach never had segregation laws, the Southside neighborhood has historically been a primarily African American neighborhood. The majority of primary and secondary historical accounts show that race relations in Fernandina Beach have historically been peaceful. Prior to Reconstruction, Nassau County was a primarily African American county (Youngblood c. 1937). Much of the early history of African Americans on Amelia Island was related to the slave trade, as during the early 1700s the Island was part of the route to freedom for slaves headed to St. Augustine (Amelia Island Tourist Development Council 2008). In the early 1800s the island also served as the center of illegal slave trade into the United States (Amelia Island Tourist Development Council 2008). It was reported that in 1817, over 1000 slaves were brought into the area's ports (Ashley 1995: 6). By the late 1800s African Americans had gained political equality in Fernandina, but many struggled economically often working on plantations for minimal or no wages (Ashley 1995: 6). The first schools for African American children and adults within Nassau County were established by Chloe Merrick of New York, during the Civil War (Williams 2000).

Fernandina residents sought to hold local elections as soon as they heard of the confederate surrender at Appomattox, Virginia (Turner 2007). In the election on May 1, 1865, 165 African Americans and nine whites voted (Turner 2007). With the collapse of the plantation system following the Civil War, African Americans in Fernandina often went to work as laborers for new industries including the railroads and later the lumber mills (Williams 2000).

The community's first African American elected official was Thomas S. Delaney, the Voter Registrar (Williams 2000), and Fernandina had a large number of additional African American officials in its early years, from 1870 through the early 1900s. Judge John H. Stays was elected office as Nassau County Justice of the Peace in 1889 and he was the last African American elected in Fernandina until the Civil Rights era (Williams 2000).

City Directories in the early 1900s show African American residents living throughout Fernandina; however, few whites lived within the Southside neighborhood. Early development in the neighborhood was concentrated at the northwest, along 8th through 12th Streets in the blocks south of Beech Street, where some residences from the period still remain (Figure 58). At this time, 8th Street was residential and many African Americans lived along the street. It was not until the 1950s, that commercial activity took over 8th Street and former 8th Street residents often moved further east in the Southside neighborhood (Albert 2010). The 1901 City Directory lists professions of residents of the Southside neighborhood as storekeeper, teacher, laborer, barber, nurse, scavenger, constable, porter, longshoreman, watchman, minister, carpenter, grocer, cook, driver, painter, seamstress, and laundress.

An account of life in Fernandina during this period describes that, "on the one hand, race relations were harmonious. In some instances whites and blacks lived in the same neighborhoods. Some blacks and whites formed lifelong friendships, but they lived in different worlds. The children attended separate schools and the families were members of separate churches. There were separate black and white entrances to the public spaces" (Williams 2000). A park within the Southside neighborhood at Beech and 9th or 10th Streets, known as the Robert Small Park, was developed around 1915-1916 by the Reverend Theodore Hawkins, of the First Colored Baptist Church. The park is no longer extant in that location. It was used for community

recreation activities such as pie eating and rope jumping contests (Ashley 1995: 22). At this time, one of the popular social activities within the Southside neighborhood was “frolics,” held in private homes on Saturday nights (or approved controlled public places). An admission of 10 to 25 cents was taken at the door and the evening included games and refreshments, live music or records, dancing, and ethnic food or a boxed supper (Ashley 1995: 22). The Knights of Pythian Hall at the corner of Beech and S 10th Street was the site of many frolics (Ashley 1995: 22).

As previously discussed, Fernandina has historically had a large African American population, and by 1918 there were only seventy more white residents than African American (Florida State Planning Board and City Commission Fernandina 1940: 41). In the early 1900s and 1910s, Fernandina relied on the labor of Gullah/Geechee men for the success of its marine industry (n.a. 2009). They served as pilots for commercial and shrimping vessels, caught the cargo, manually hauled the nets, built boats, and sewed nets. Some also owned commercial fishing vessels and operated them as captains. Charles Thomas Smith, an African American resident of the area, noted that African Americans and whites were paid the same in the fishing industry in Fernandina, based on what they caught (Williams 2000). Fernandina resident Charles Albert noted that a streetcar ran along Beech Street to the docks, allowing easy access for residents of the Southside neighborhood (Albert 2010).

Many accounts attribute the peaceful race relations throughout the 1920s and 1930s in Fernandina to the poor economic situation prior to the construction of the mills. Charles Thomas Smith, born in 1920, noted that, “Fernandina was lots better than St. Augustine. Didn’t pay much attention to segregation. Because you’re born in it. You live in it. There was not a boundary line in Fernandina. Never hear people talking about segregation per se. We all lived together. We all was poor. Everybody lived together and everybody was happy” (Williams 2000). Rudolph Williams, born in Jacksonville in 1928, also attributed the area’s peaceful race relations to the material conditions. He stated that, “we were all like a family up there (in Fernandina), black and white. We lived next door to one another... We played together, we fought together everybody just about knew one another, black and white. You could walk up in any store and they called your name... It’s (Fernandina) been a pretty good place compared to other little small areas in the South. We didn’t have too much of that racial stuff. A lot of us, we (are) good friends. That’s all” (Williams 2000).

The Southside neighborhood saw some residential construction throughout the 1920s, but the largest new development was the construction of Peck High School (8NA132) in 1928. The school was named for William H. Peck who was known as the educational leader of African Americans on Amelia Island, and had helped secure funding from the Rosenwald Foundation for the school’s development (Bland and Associates 2007: 3-61). Development in the Southside neighborhood through the 1920s and 1930s was primarily concentrated at the northern and western portions of the neighborhood, where easier access to downtown was provided. The largest historic houses are located along Beech Street, close to the former streetcar, and Charles Albert noted that this area between Beech Street and the high school, was referred to as Sandersville. As was seen throughout Fernandina, construction picked up in the Southside neighborhood during the 1930s in reaction to the population boom with the opening of the mills. Many of the area’s residents worked at the mills, and two unions formed (white and African American) which would later join in the 1960s (Williams 2000).

As previously discussed, race relations were peaceful in Fernandina, even through integration. The first African American deputy, Jeremiah “Jerry” Mattox, was sworn into the Fernandina Beach police department in 1950 by Sheriff H.J. Youngblood. However, at the time he had no authority to arrest white lawbreakers. Mattox was well liked and respected within the community, and after being killed in the line of duty in 1954 he was buried in Bosque Bello Cemetery (8NA1245). African American resident Alice Card worked at Peck High School and at the time of integration went to work at Emma B. Love Elementary School. She described her experience as one of the first African American teachers at an integrated school as very positive, the teachers were accepting, and there were no problems (Williams 2000).

Churches have historically been located throughout the neighborhood. Brief information about the origins of some of the neighborhood’s churches is included below.

- The House of God Saints in Christ was founded in 1953, by Sister Elsie Patterson on S 10th Street, it was then located in a tent across the street, and then a building at 816 S 10th Street (Ashley 1995:18).
- St Marks Holiness Church was constructed in 1958 at the corner of Hickory and S 12th Streets by Sister Elsie Patterson (Ashley 1995: 18).
- Elm Street Church of God was founded in 1929 at Samuel and Maggie Rashard’s home, then a rented shop at Jasmine and S 8th Street served as its home until a church building was constructed which was later destroyed by fire (Ashley 1995: 17).
- Mt. Calvary Baptist Church (8NA628) was founded by members of New Zion Missionary Baptist Church in 1887. The original structure was destroyed and the current structure at 901 Broome Street replaced it (Ashley 1995: 16).
- O’Neal Memorial Baptist Church was founded in 1947 by Reverend Lensworth Samuel Morrison Sr. (Ashley 1995: 16). Its current structure is not located within the Southside neighborhood.
- New Zion Missionary Baptist Church was founded in May of 1870 as Lewis Cook met in a stable on 1st Street. The congregation later met in homes, the first church structure was destroyed by a 1904 fire, and the present structure at 10 S 10th Street (8NA673) was built from 1906-1908 (Ashley 1995: 16).
- First Missionary Baptist Church was founded in 1860, and in 1874 the Gothic Revival church at 20 S 9th Street (8NA513) was built (Ashley 1995: 14).
- Trinity United Methodist Church was founded in 1822 by two white missionaries and is now known as Trinity Methodist Episcopal church (8NA589) at Ash Street and S 8th Street (Ashley 1995: 13).

The 1950s saw the Southside neighborhood’s greatest period of historic development. Houses constructed during this period were primarily modest Masonry Vernacular structures, as detailed further in the Character Defining Features section of the report. The neighborhood rapidly expanded during this period as construction was finally able to meet the huge demand for new residences created after the mills were constructed. During this period, in 1961, public housing

was also constructed around the intersection of Jasmine Street and S 10th Street to meet the community's need for clean, safe, affordable housing. The Southside Elementary School was also constructed at 1112 Jasmine Street in 1966 in order to meet the community's growing population. A review of available City Directories from the later 1950s shows that residents professions and employers included fisherman, bookkeeper, shrimper, laborer, Container Corporation, City Department of Public Works, maid, Rayonier Corporation, orderly, Nassau General Hospital, cafeteria worker, nurses aid, Terminal bag, building contractor, presser, teacher, yardman, Nassau Building and supply, Seaboard Air Line Railroad, watchman, machine operator, carpenter, surveyor, city policeman, barber shop, boat builder, bricklayer, construction worker, cook, logger, cement finisher, cleaner, and deputy county sheriff.

In the 1950s, new construction infilled around the existing residences within the neighborhood and many vacant lots still remained. The southeastern portion of the neighborhood still remained largely undeveloped at this time. An aerial photograph of the neighborhood in 1960 is included in Figure 59. In the following years construction continued throughout the neighborhood and the southeastern portion of the Neighborhood Planning Area was developed.

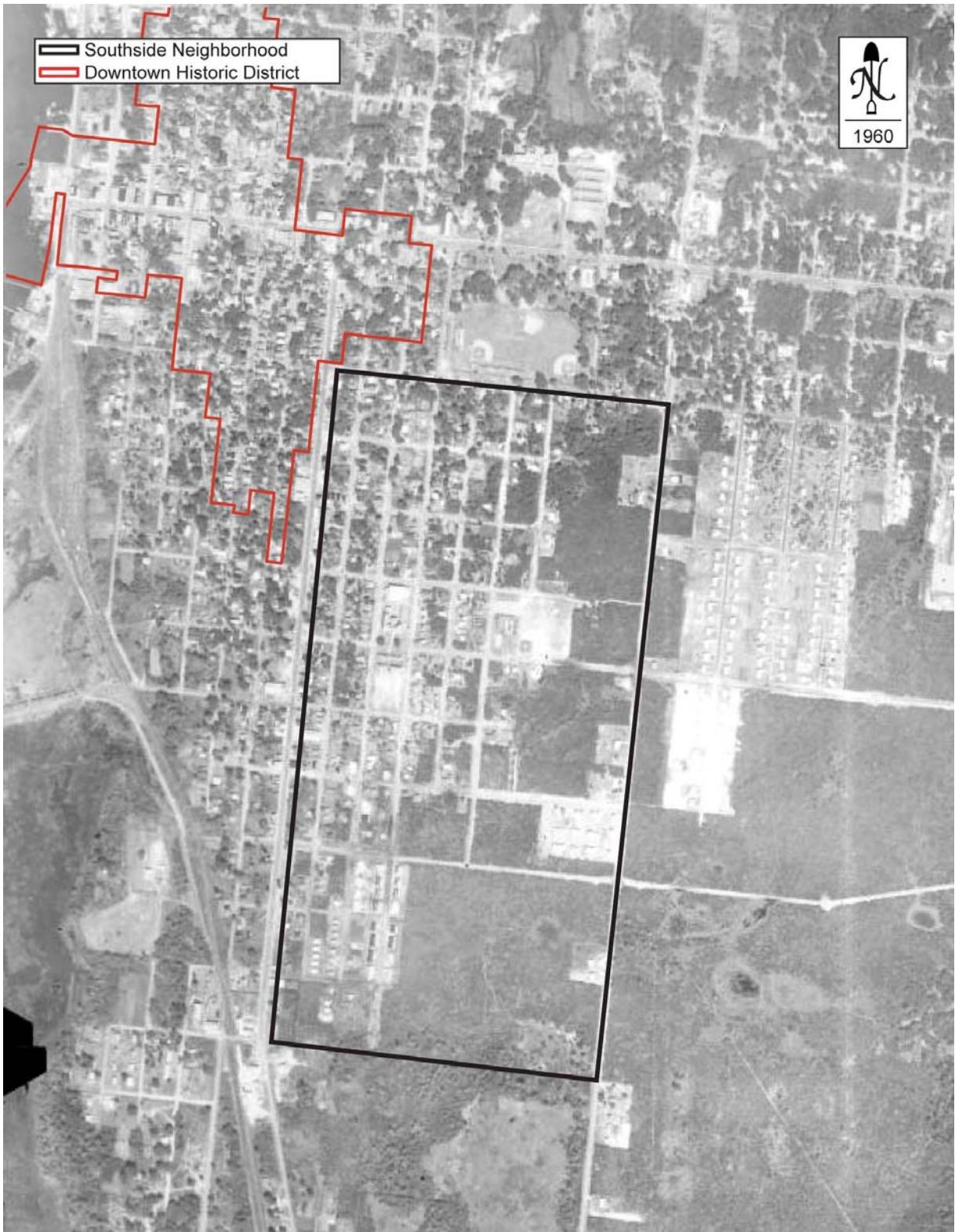


Figure 59: 1960 Aerial Photograph showing the layout of the Southside Neighborhood Planning Area

Aerial Photograph Courtesy of Aerial Photography: Florida, State University System of Florida, <http://www.digital.uflib.ufl.edu/collections/FLAP/Index.htm>



Figure 60: Current Aerial Photograph for Comparison with Figure 59

Character Defining Features

Land use

The Neighborhood Planning Area contains primarily single family residences (Figure 61-Figure 63). However, it also includes churches, a few commercial structures along the west side of S 9th Street, public housing, a community center, Southside Elementary School and Peck High School (8NA132) (Figure 64-Figure 69).



Figure 61: Typical Street of Single Family Residences in the Southside Neighborhood Planning Area, S 10th Street, facing northwest at 517 10th Street



Figure 62: Typical Street of Single Family Residences in the Southside Neighborhood Planning Area, Division Street, facing southeast at 218 Division Street



Figure 63: Typical Street of Single Family Residences in the Southside Neighborhood Planning Area, Hickory Street, facing east at S 10th Street



Figure 64: Representative Photo of Church within the Southside Neighborhood Planning Area, Macedonia AME Church, facing southwest



Figure 65: Representative Photo of Church within the Southside Neighborhood Planning Area, Elm Street Church of God, Corner of Elm Street and S 11th Street, facing southwest



Figure 66: Community Center at Corner of Elm Street and S 12th Street, Elm Park, facing southeast



Figure 67: Peck High School (8NA132), facing northwest



Figure 68: Southside Elementary School, facing southeast



Figure 69: Public Housing within the Southside Neighborhood Planning Area, View from 908-910 S 10th Street, facing southeast

Height/stories

The structures in this Neighborhood Planning Area are primarily one-story, but some historic and non-historic two-story structures exist as well. The historic two-story structures located on Beech Street are generally the largest in the neighborhood.

Setbacks

The structures are set back various distances from the road, some being recessed more than others. Due to the varying periods of development, there are often rows of houses with a uniform setback interspersed with those of greater or lesser setbacks (Figure 70 and Figure 71).



Figure 70: View of Varying Setbacks of Residences in the Southside Neighborhood Planning Area, S 9th Street, facing southeast toward 318 and 324 S 9th Street



Figure 71: View of Series of Residences with Uniform Setbacks in the Southside Neighborhood Planning Area, S 10th Street, facing southwest from 305 S 10th Street

Density

The overall density throughout the Neighborhood Planning Area is low due to vacant lots. The northern portion of the neighborhood contains more vacant lots than the southern. The presence of vacant lots throughout the neighborhood is illustrated on Figure 58 on page 70.

Building materials

The structures are constructed of concrete block, brick, or wood frame. Exterior materials include weatherboard, concrete block, vertical wood siding, vinyl or metal siding, asbestos shingles, and stucco.

Garage entrances

The neighborhood has few garages and those which are present are typically 1-car and either integral to the house or detached and similar in character to the house (Figure 72).



Figure 72: View of Typical Integral 1-car Garage in the Southside Neighborhood Planning Area, S 10th Street, 620 S 11th Street, facing east

Porch enclosures

The porch enclosures throughout the neighborhood are varied. Some are open (Figure 73 and Figure 74) or have simple rails with column or pier supports, many of which have been replaced. Other porches are enclosed or screened (Figure 75 and Figure 76).



Figure 73: Representative View of Open Porches with a Simple Rail on Shotgun Houses in the Southside Neighborhood Planning Area, 318-320 S 9th Street (8NA530-531), facing southeast



Figure 74: Representative View of Open Porch with No Rail in the Southside Neighborhood Planning Area, 531 S 10th Street, facing west



Figure 75: Representative View of Screened Porch in the Southside Neighborhood Planning Area, 309 S 9th Street (8NA528), facing west



Figure 76: Representative View of Screened Porch in the Southside Neighborhood Planning Area, 304 11th Street, facing southeast

Fences and walls

The majority of the residences within the Neighborhood Planning Area do not have fences. Of those that do, chain link is most common and there are also some wooden fences (Figure 77).



Figure 77: Representative View of Residence with a Chain Link Fence in the Southside Neighborhood Planning Area, 217 Division Street, facing southwest

Scale

Most of the residences in the neighborhood are moderately sized, with some smaller shotgun houses. A random sampling of 20 structures was selected to determine an approximate average square footage for the Neighborhood Planning Area. The approximate average is 1149 square feet.

Floor area ratio

The floor area ratio of the structures is typically low, as they are primarily one story structures which do not cover the entire lot.

Lot coverage

The lot coverage is moderate throughout the neighborhood. It appears to average approximately 50% with each house having a small yard/green space

Street patterns and widths

The streets are paved and set in a grid pattern with varying widths. The grid pattern of the streets is evident on Figure 58 on page 70, and typical views of the streetscape are included in Figure 78- Figure 81.



Figure 78: Representative View of Street within the Southside Neighborhood Planning Area, S 10th Street, facing north from Cedar Street



Figure 79: Representative View of Street within the Southside Neighborhood Planning Area, S 12th Street, facing south from Beech Street



Figure 80: Representative View of Street within the Southside Neighborhood Planning Area, S 11th Street, facing south from Elm Street



Figure 81: Representative View of Street within the Southside Neighborhood Planning Area, Elm Street, facing east from Division Street

Accessory structures

There are few accessory structures within the Neighborhood Planning Area. A few of the residences have a detached garage or carport.

Architectural styles

Architectural styles in the Neighborhood Planning Area include primarily Frame Vernacular (Figure 82 and Figure 83) and Masonry Vernacular structures (Figure 84-Figure 86) and there are some Minimal Traditional residences (Figure 72, page 83). There are also a few examples of the shotgun house form, as shown in Figure 73 on page 84.



Figure 82: Representative Photo of Frame Vernacular Residence within the Southside Neighborhood Planning Area, 524 S 9th Street, facing east



Figure 83: Representative Photo of Frame Vernacular Residences within the Southside Neighborhood Planning Area, 209-211 S 9th Street (8NA522-523), facing southwest



Figure 84: Representative Photo of Masonry Vernacular Residences within the Southside Neighborhood Planning Area, facing southeast at 1008 Hickory Street



Figure 85: Representative Photo of Masonry Vernacular Residence within the Southside Neighborhood Planning Area, 819 S 10th Street, facing west



Figure 86: Representative Photo of Masonry Vernacular Residence within the Southside Neighborhood Planning Area, 513 S 9th Street, facing west

Spatial relationships

This neighborhood was not cohesively developed. As previously discussed, there are many vacant lots interspersed with the residences. The streets surrounding the Neighborhood Planning Area (8th Street, Beech Street, 14th Street, and Lime Street) are major thoroughfares.

Sidewalks and landscaping

Sidewalks are located throughout portions of the neighborhood. When present, they are typically only located on one side of the street, and they do not connect throughout the entire Neighborhood Planning Area. They are located primarily in close proximity to Peck High School (8NA132). Figure 78-Figure 81 on pages 87-88 show the typical sidewalks throughout the neighborhood, and Figure 87 and Figure 88 are representative views of streets without sidewalks. Landscaping is primarily natural rather than manicured, and typical landscape features are shown in the figures throughout this section. The northeastern section of the Neighborhood Planning Area has a higher level of natural landscaping than the rest (Figure 88). The higher level of landscaping is created by both vacant lots covered in trees and plants, and built lots which are heavily wooded and greened with natural landscape.



Figure 87: Representative Photo of Street without Sidewalks within the Southside Neighborhood Planning Area, 10th Street north of Kelp Street, facing north



Figure 88: Representative photo of Street without Sidewalks and the higher level of Landscaping at the Northeast within the Southside Neighborhood Planning Area, Division Street, facing north at Elm Street

Massing

The structures are primarily rectangular with some of L-shaped or irregular forms.

Roof line and pitch

Structures in the neighborhood feature hip and gable roofs of varying slopes. The roof pitch tends to be steeper in the older houses, with lower slopes being more common in the 1940s and later houses. The variety of hip and gable roof forms and slopes is shown on Figure 73-Figure 76 on pages 84-85, Figure 89, and Figure 90.



Figure 89: View of Typical Residence with a Low Pitched Gable Roof, 1024 S 9th Street, facing east



Figure 90: View of Typical Residence with a Low Pitched Hip Roof, 521 S 9th Street, facing northwest

Lot size and width

The lot size and width varies throughout the neighborhood as illustrated on Figure 58 on page 70. The average lot size within the Neighborhood Planning Area is .229 acres, according to the records of the Nassau County Property Appraiser.

Elevation features

The residences typically have little architectural ornament on the elevations. Porches and covered entries are located on the main elevation of the majority of the residences. They have both asymmetrical and symmetrical façade arrangements.

Parking and driveways

Driveways throughout the Neighborhood Planning Area include unpaved and paved driveways (Figure 91-Figure 92). Parking is also common along the swales.



Figure 91: Representative View of Residence with a Paved Driveway, 621 S 9th Street, facing west



Figure 92: Representative View of Unpaved Driveways, 619 S 10th Street, facing northwest

Doors and windows

The doors and windows vary throughout the neighborhood and the majority of the structures feature replacement windows and doors. The primary window types are awning and metal single hung sash with a variety of light configurations. There are some residences which retain their original wooden single hung sash windows.

Building orientation

Residences are typically set parallel to the roadway, with only a few set at an angle.

Trees and shrubbery

The majority of the lots in the Neighborhood Planning Area have trees providing shade. Shrubs are often used to delineate the property lines. As previously discussed, there is a higher level of natural landscaping in the portion of the Neighborhood Planning Area to the northeast, and the tree canopy overhangs the roadway (Figure 88, page 93).

Topography

The topography of the Neighborhood Planning Area is consistently flat and even.

Recommendations

It is the evaluation of Janus Research that the Southside Neighborhood Planning Area is not eligible for designation as a local or National Register historic district. During the 2007, *The Historic Properties Resurvey, City of Fernandina Beach, Nassau County, Florida* by Bland and Associates, Inc., a field survey of the northern portion of the Neighborhood Planning Area was conducted. This report stated that the neighborhood has had a high level of alteration, additions, demolition, and new construction such that it does not retain sufficient history integrity to allow for the expansion of the Downtown Historic District to include the neighborhood, or to create a separate historic district.

Solely based on the proportion of historic structures to non-historic structures, only 43% of the existing resources could be considered contributing to a potential historic district. This is not a sufficient concentration of historic resources from which to compose a historic district. As illustrated in the History and Development Patterns discussion, there is also a large amount of vacant lots within the Neighborhood Planning Area which disrupt its cohesion. Further, many of the existing historic structures have been altered and lack sufficient historic integrity to be considered contributing to a historic district, further reducing the proportion of contributing resources.

This area has a rich history associated with Fernandina Beach's African American community. Although many of the structures have been altered, the overall scale of the development has generally been maintained. However, due to the number of vacant lots and recent threats of new development, there is concern that new development could alter the character of the neighborhood. Figure 93 and Figure 94 illustrate non-historic out of scale development which has occurred within the Neighborhood Planning Area. If left unregulated, it is possible additional new development of this scale could occur throughout the neighborhood and any physical evidence of its rich history and character would be lost.



Figure 93: Representative Photo of Out of Scale Development within the Southside Neighborhood Planning Area, 618 S 9th Street, Facing Southeast



Figure 94: Representative Photo of Out of Scale Development within the Southside Neighborhood Planning Area, 1016 Cedar Street, Facing Southwest

It is recommended that the character of the Southside Neighborhood Planning Area be protected by the creation of a conservation district. Additional background on conservation districts, their purposes and types of regulations is included on pages 43-45. Three potential boundaries for conservation districts are included on Figure 95. Option one includes the most concentrated early historical development, as well as the largest number of vacant lots. Due to these characteristics it appears to be the most threatened portion of the Neighborhood Planning Area. Option two expands the boundaries of option one further south. The boundaries are based on the locations of historic resources, excluding vacant lots and non-historic structures on the periphery. These boundaries include more of the structures constructed from the 1940s through the 1960s. Option three has the most inclusive boundaries, based on the geographic, regular boundaries of major roads. It includes the entirety of the Southside Neighborhood, both non-historic and historic development.

The northern portion of this Neighborhood Planning Area was surveyed as part of *The Historic Properties Resurvey, City of Fernandina Beach, Nassau County, Florida* by Bland and Associates, Inc., in 2007. The 2007 report and FMSF forms should be referenced, and the recommendations for local or National Register individual historic designation of any eligible structures should be pursued to protect the area's individually significant resources. The southern portion of the Neighborhood Planning Area has not been recently surveyed. This area is recommended for future survey, and the documentation of its individual resources would add to the broader understanding of the City of Fernandina Beach's history and the history of the area's African American community. The table within Appendix C notes any historic structures within the Neighborhood Planning Area which have not been previously recorded, and should be the focus of future survey work. Priorities for future survey efforts are discussed further in the Conclusions section of this report.

