



# STAFF REPORT

## City of Gainesville Historic Preservation Board

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**AGENDA ITEM:** **Public Hearing 3**  
Petition to place 233 West University Avenue on the Local Register of Historic Places

**ADDRESS/PARCEL:** 233 West University Avenue  
12948-000-000

**OWNER INFORMATION:** Florida Theater Gainesville LLC  
PO Box 12891  
Gainesville, FL 32604

**DATE OF CONSTRUCTION:** 1928 (Property Appraiser), circa +1920 (FMSF AL01292)  
But from newspaper accounts we know that opening day was September 10, 1928

**ZONING** The property is zoned DT (Downtown).  
Maximum stories by right: 12 stories (14 with bonuses)

**BRIEF HISTORIC NARRATIVE:** The Florida Theater opened on September 10, 1928 to great fanfare. Built at a cost of \$150,000 (or by some accounts, a quarter of a million dollars), it was said to rank with the finest theaters in the entire South, though it clearly was not as elaborate or as large-scale as the Tampa Theatre (1926) or Jacksonville's Florida Theatre (1927).

The theater boasted of having the Vitaphone system, which was a type of sound system used on feature films and shorts made by Warner Brother Studios in the late 1920s. The building had an 800-seat capacity and



featured some of the most cutting edge fire suppression features for its time. The end of WWII and the fervent construction of houses for returning soldiers and their families began a trend for residents to start moving away from the downtown to suburbs, which led to the closing of the theater.

In 1974 the building experienced another major era when it became “The Great Southern Music Hall”. For almost a decade, the Great Southern Music Hall would put Gainesville on the musical cultural map in the South. A number of nationally and internationally recognized bands, comedians, and entertainers would perform here. The Music Hall would last less than a decade, however, as the three young attorneys who had created the venue were moving on in their own careers.

Other attempts to restore and reinvigorate the old movie palace took place in subsequent years. By the 1990s, the building was host to various dance parties, all-night raves and other events that were mostly attended by college students. This use proved to be unsustainable, and the theater was once again shuttered, becoming more derelict as time went on.

The current owner, Bill Bryson, purchased the Florida Theatre in 2017. Mr. Bryson has an extensive background in music venues and concert promotions; he once owned and operated the locally famous Covered Dish in Gainesville from 1992-2000. He hopes to bring back the Florida Theater to its former glory as a music venue for the community and as a catalyst for other revitalization projects in downtown Gainesville.

## **BUILDING DESCRIPTION**

The two story brick building is now a part of a continuous row of commercial structures along the 200 block of West University Avenue.

The interior of the building has been fairly gutted over the years. The original seats were replaced in a 1980s renovation and then the seats were removed entirely when the building became a massive dance-hall.

Amazingly, most of the original exterior fenestration and original ornamentation on the exterior is still intact.

Stylistically, it has been called many things, from colonial revival (Florida Master Site File) to commercial brick with Neo-Federal Details (also FMSF),



to Neoclassical, to what is probably the most accurate description, a simplistic version of Adamesque Revival.

Adamesque Revival is a form of Neoclassical architecture, but exhibits those decorative motifs most often used by Robert Adams and his brothers, including medallions, urns, vine scrolls and pilasters.

The building features brick quoins at the corners, decorative urns topping the parapet, triplet window sets separated by engaged pilasters, and terra cotta medallions. A more detailed architectural description appears in the designation report.

Though the ground floor of the theatre has lost much of its original integrity, it is the current owner’s vision to bring back the original marquee canopy and ground floor design.

**CRITERIA  
FOR  
DESIGNATION:**

**CRITERIA FOR DESIGNATION**

The City of Gainesville’s Historic Preservation Ordinance is modeled after federal criteria for evaluation found in the *Code of Federal Regulations, Title 36, Part 60*, and as set forth in City of Gainesville Land Development Code Section 30-4.28 (C)(3), *Review Criteria*.

All potential designation resources are evaluated to determine if the quality of significance in American history, architecture, archaeology, engineering, and culture is present in the districts, sites, buildings, structures, and objects that possess integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association.

The Florida Theater is significant under the following criteria, as set forth in Section 30-4.28 (C)(3):

Criterion (a): Is associated with events or persons that are significant to our local, state, or national history; and

Criterion (b): Embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction.



Throughout its lifetime, the Florida Theater hosted hundreds of thousands of theater and concert patrons, playing an integral part in the early development of Gainesville’s core downtown. The venue opened with great fanfare in 1928 where it showed one of the first talking pictures, “The Four Walls,” starring John Gilbert and Joan Crawford. For many decades, it served as a music and concert venue, hosting some of the county’s most famous musicians and band performances, including Tom Petty, Jerry Lee Lewis, Bo Diddley, Ray Charles, Melissa Manchester, Dave Brubeck, BB King, Elvis Bishop, Jimmy Buffet, Ike and Tina Turner, Patti LaBelle, Greg Allman, Steppenwolf, and many more. The Florida Theater fulfills Criterion (a): *associated with events or persons that are significant to our local, state, or national history.*

The two-story brick building exhibits Adamesque Revival details including turned balusters, sunburst panels above the central windows, and stone and brick quoining. Some alterations have occurred on the primary façade over the years, including a change to the marquee and the enclosure of the ground floor picture window storefronts. The marquee had already been altered by the 1940s and therefore this version maintains historic significance in its own right. Other original architectural features on the primary façade remain intact. The building fulfills Criterion (b): *embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction.*

**RECOMMENDATION**

**FROM STAFF:**

Staff recommends that application request to make the Florida Theater, located at 233 West University Avenue a locally historic site be forwarded to the City Commission for final approval with support from the Historic Preservation Board.

**EXHIBIT 1:**

Map of 233 West University Avenue

**EXHIBIT 2:**

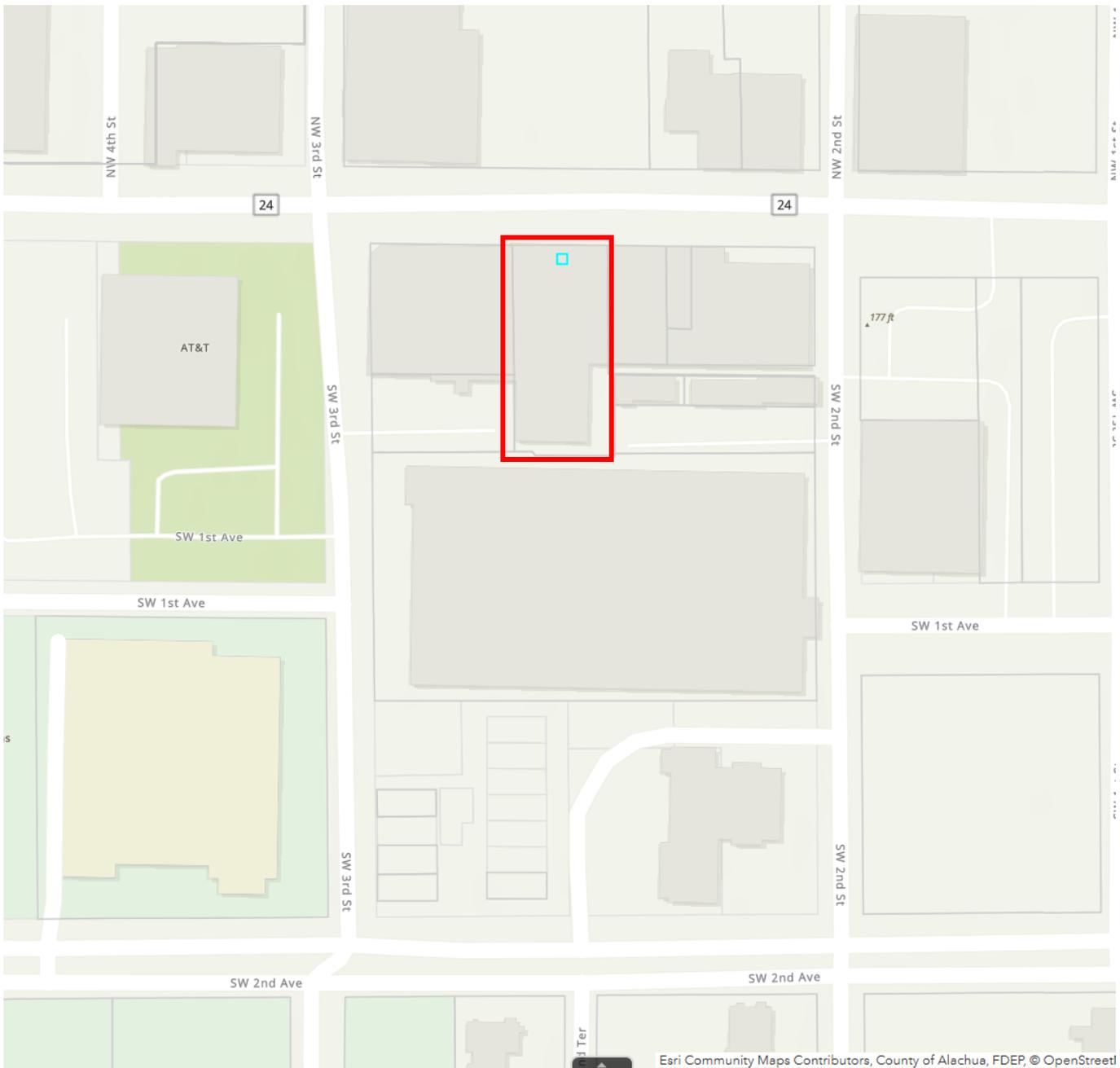
Florida Master Site File (FMSF) AL01292



**EXHIBIT 1**

**HISTORIC PRESERVATION BOARD**  
**September 10, 2024**  
**PUBLIC HEARING 3, Historic Designation of Florida Theater**

Map of 233 West University Avenue  
*Source:* Department of Sustainable Development Interactive Map



STATE OF FLORIDA  
DEPARTMENT OF STATE  
Division of Archives, History  
and Records Management  
DS-HSP-3AAA Rev. 3-79

**FLORIDA MASTER SITE FILE**  
**Site Inventory Form**

FDAHRM 802 ==  
1009 ==

Site Name Great Southern Music Hall 830 == Site No. 8 AL1292  
Address of Site: 235 W. University Ave Survey Date 8007 820 ==  
Instruction for locating \_\_\_\_\_ 905 ==

Location: (see tax roll no. 12949) 813 ==  
subdivision name block no. lot no. 868 ==

County: Alachua 808 ==  
Owner of Site: Name: Silverman, Joseph and Faye ;

Address: Box 416  
Gainesville, FL 32602 902 ==  
Type of Ownership private 848 == Recording Date \_\_\_\_\_ 832 ==

Recorder:  
Name & Title: Ann DeRosa Byrne, (Consultant) ;  
Address: The History Group 300 W. Peachtree St.  
Suite 16 DE Atlanta, Ga. 30308 818 ==

Condition of Site: Integrity of Site: \_\_\_\_\_ Original Use entertainment 838 ==

Check One Check One or More  
 Excellent 863 ==  Altered \_\_\_\_\_ 858 ==  
 Good 863 ==  Unaltered \_\_\_\_\_ 858 ==  
 Fair 863 ==  Original Site \_\_\_\_\_ 858 ==  
 Deteriorated 863 ==  Restored ( ) (Date:  ) 858 ==  
 Moved ( ) (Date:  ) 858 ==

Present Use entertainment 850 ==  
Dates: Beginning c.+1920 844 ==  
Culture/Phase American 840 ==  
Period 20th century 845 ==

NR Classification Category: building 916 ==

Threats to Site:  
Check One or More  
 Zoning (  ) \_\_\_\_\_ (  ) 878 ==  Transportation (  ) \_\_\_\_\_ (  ) 878 ==  
 Development (  ) \_\_\_\_\_ (  ) 878 ==  Fill (  ) \_\_\_\_\_ (  ) 878 ==  
 Deterioration (  ) \_\_\_\_\_ (  ) 878 ==  Dredge (  ) \_\_\_\_\_ (  ) 878 ==  
 Borrowing (  ) \_\_\_\_\_ (  ) 878 ==  
 Other (See Remarks Below): \_\_\_\_\_ 878 ==

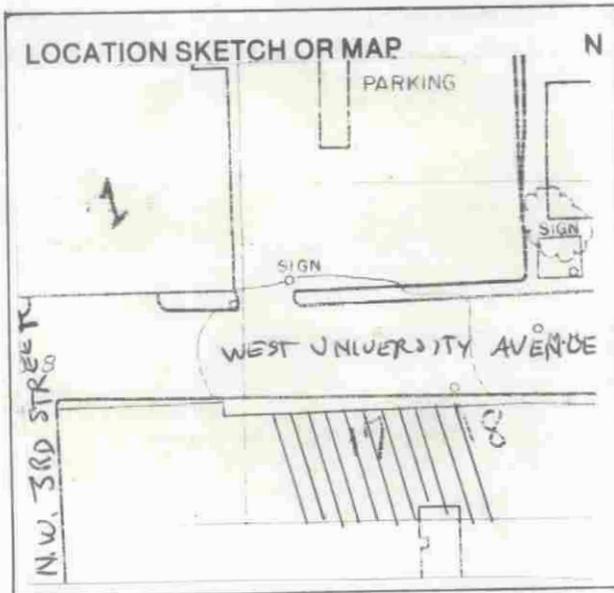
Areas of Significance: architecture, local history 910 ==

Significance:  
Originally the Florida Theatre, this two story brick commercial building with NeoFederal details has been converted for use as the Great Southern Music Hall. Turned balusters, keystone jack arches, sunburst panels in arched windows and unfluted corinthian columns and pilasters as well as stone and brick quoining are the details. The building is located on the W. University Ave commercial strip extension of the CBD.  
**SEE SITE FILE STAFF FOR ORIGINAL PHOTO(S) OR MAP(S)**  
911 ==

5

1

ARCHITECT \_\_\_\_\_ 872 ==  
 BUILDER \_\_\_\_\_ 874 ==  
 STYLE AND/OR PERIOD Colonial Revival#Commercial 964 ==  
 PLAN TYPE rectangular; 966 ==  
 EXTERIOR FABRIC(S) Brick: Stretcher 854 ==  
 STRUCTURAL SYSTEM(S) \_\_\_\_\_ 856 ==  
 PORCHES \_\_\_\_\_ 942 ==  
 FOUNDATION: slab 942 ==  
 ROOF TYPE: Built-up 942 ==  
 SECONDARY ROOF STRUCTURE(S): \_\_\_\_\_ 942 ==  
 CHIMNEY LOCATION: \_\_\_\_\_ 942 ==  
 WINDOW TYPE: shuttered 942 ==  
 CHIMNEY: \_\_\_\_\_ 882 ==  
 ROOF SURFACING: \_\_\_\_\_ 882 ==  
 ORNAMENT EXTERIOR: Stone# Plaster 882 ==  
 NO. OF CHIMNEYS 952 == NO. OF STORIES 2 950 ==  
 NO. OF DORMERS \_\_\_\_\_ 954 ==  
 Map Reference (incl. scale & date) \_\_\_\_\_ 809 ==  
 Latitude and Longitude: \_\_\_\_\_ 800 ==  
 Site Size (Approx. Acreage of Property): LT 1 833 ==



Township	Range	Section	
10S	20E	05	812 ==

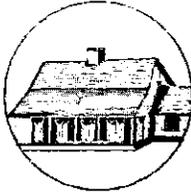
UTM Coordinates: \_\_\_\_\_ 890 ==  
 Zone \_\_\_\_\_ Easting \_\_\_\_\_ Northing \_\_\_\_\_

Photographic Records Numbers 32d 16, 17 860 ==

Contact Print



Original  
 Update



**HISTORICAL STRUCTURE FORM**  
**FLORIDA MASTER SITE FILE**  
 Version 4.0 1/07

Site #8 AL01292  
 Field Date 3-24-2011  
 Form Date 3-29-2011  
 Recorder # \_\_\_\_\_

Shaded Fields represent the minimum acceptable level of documentation.  
 Consult the *Guide to Historical Structure Forms* for detailed instructions.

Site Name(s) (address if none) Florida Theater Multiple Listing (DHR only) \_\_\_\_\_  
 Survey Project Name Downtown Commercial Business District Survey # (DHR only) \_\_\_\_\_  
 National Register Category (please check one)  building  structure  district  site  object  
 Ownership:  private-profit  private-nonprofit  private-individual  private-nonspecific  city  county  state  federal  Native American  foreign  unknown

**LOCATION & MAPPING**

Street Number 233 Direction W Street Name University Street Type Avenue Suffix Direction \_\_\_\_\_  
 Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Cross Streets (nearest / between) SW 2nd Street  
 USGS 7.5 Map Name GAINESVILLE EAST USGS Date 1994 Plat or Other Map \_\_\_\_\_  
 City / Town (within 3 miles) Gainesville In City Limits?  yes  no  unknown County Alachua  
 Township 10S Range 20E Section 5 1/4 section:  NW  SW  SE  NE Irregular-name: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Tax Parcel # 12948-000-000 Landgrant \_\_\_\_\_  
 Subdivision Name \_\_\_\_\_ Block \_\_\_\_\_ Lot \_\_\_\_\_  
 UTM Coordinates: Zone  16  17 Easting       Northing        
 Other Coordinates: X: \_\_\_\_\_ Y: \_\_\_\_\_ Coordinate System & Datum \_\_\_\_\_  
 Name of Public Tract (e.g., park) \_\_\_\_\_

**HISTORY**

Construction Year: 1927  approximately  year listed or earlier  year listed or later  
 Original Use Theater From (year): 1928 To (year): 1974  
 Current Use Bar From (year): \_\_\_\_\_ To (year): \_\_\_\_\_  
 Other Use Southern Music Hall From (year): 1975 To (year): \_\_\_\_\_  
 Moves:  yes  no  unknown Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Original address \_\_\_\_\_  
 Alterations:  yes  no  unknown Date: 3-31-2009 Nature interior demolition  
 Additions:  yes  no  unknown Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Nature \_\_\_\_\_  
 Architect (last name first): \_\_\_\_\_ Builder (last name first): M. Tucker  
 Ownership History (especially original owner, dates, profession, etc.) J.M. Farr (1917-23); Kate C. Dutton (1923-27); M. Tucker (1927-42, built Florida Theater); J. L. Strange (1942-?)  
 Is the Resource Affected by a Local Preservation Ordinance?  yes  no  unknown Describe \_\_\_\_\_

**DESCRIPTION**

Style Adamesque Revival Exterior Plan Rectangular Number of Stories 2  
 Exterior Fabric(s) 1. Brick 2. Stone 3.  
 Roof Type(s) 1. Built-up 2. 3.  
 Roof Material(s) 1. Built-up 2. 3.  
 Roof secondary strucs. (dormers etc.) 1. 2.  
 Windows (types, materials, etc.) arched, 1/1 DHS, metal; fixed single pane storefront

Distinguishing Architectural Features (exterior or interior ornaments) turned balusters, keystone jack arches; sunburst panels in arched windows; unfluted Corinthian columns and pilasters; stone and brick quoining detail

Ancillary Features / Outbuildings (record outbuildings, major landscape features; use continuation sheet if needed.)  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

DHR USE ONLY		OFFICIAL EVALUATION		DHR USE ONLY	
NR List Date _____	SHPO - Appears to meet criteria for NR listing: <input type="checkbox"/> yes <input type="checkbox"/> no <input type="checkbox"/> insufficient info	Date _____	Int. _____		
<input type="checkbox"/> Owner Objection	KEEPER - Determined eligible: <input type="checkbox"/> yes <input type="checkbox"/> no	Date _____			
	NR Criteria for Evaluation: <input type="checkbox"/> a <input type="checkbox"/> b <input type="checkbox"/> c <input type="checkbox"/> d (see <i>National Register Bulletin 15</i> , p. 2)				

**HISTORICAL STRUCTURE FORM**

Site # AL01292

**DESCRIPTION (continued)**

Chimney: No. \_\_\_\_\_ Chimney Material(s): 1. \_\_\_\_\_ 2. \_\_\_\_\_  
 Structural System(s): 1. Brick 2. \_\_\_\_\_ 3. \_\_\_\_\_  
 Foundation Type(s): 1. Slab 2. \_\_\_\_\_  
 Foundation Material(s): 1. Concrete, Generic 2. \_\_\_\_\_  
 Main Entrance (stylistic details) marquee over entrance

Porch Descriptions (types, locations, roof types, etc.) \_\_\_\_\_

Condition (overall resource condition):  excellent  good  fair  deteriorated  ruinous

Narrative Description of Resource \_\_\_\_\_

Archaeological Remains \_\_\_\_\_  Check if Archaeological Form Completed

**RESEARCH METHODS (check all that apply)**

- |  |   |   |  |
|--|---|---|--|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> FMSF record search (sites/surveys) | <input type="checkbox"/> library research | <input type="checkbox"/> building permits         | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Sanborn maps   |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> FL State Archives/photo collection | <input type="checkbox"/> city directory   | <input type="checkbox"/> occupant/owner interview | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> plat maps      |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> property appraiser / tax records   | <input type="checkbox"/> newspaper files  | <input type="checkbox"/> neighbor interview       | <input type="checkbox"/> Public Lands Survey (DEP) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> cultural resource survey (CRAS)               | <input type="checkbox"/> historic photos  | <input type="checkbox"/> interior inspection      | <input type="checkbox"/> HABS/HAER record search   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> other methods (describe) _____                |   |   |  |

Bibliographic References (give FMSF manuscript # if relevant, use continuation sheet if needed) \_\_\_\_\_

**OPINION OF RESOURCE SIGNIFICANCE**

Appears to meet the criteria for National Register listing individually?  yes  no  insufficient information

Appears to meet the criteria for National Register listing as part of a district?  yes  no  insufficient information

Explanation of Evaluation (required, whether significant or not; use separate sheet if needed) The Florida Theater was the first Gainesville theater to offer sound movies. In the 1970s it featured live acts like B.B. King. The two-story building with NeoFederal details has been converted into a nightclub.

Area(s) of Historical Significance (see National Register Bulletin 15, p. 8 for categories: e.g. "architecture", "ethnic heritage", "community planning & development", etc.)

- |                                    |                                   |          |
|------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|----------|
| 1. <u>Architecture</u>             | 3. <u>Performing arts/theater</u> | 5. _____ |
| 2. <u>Entertainment/recreation</u> | 4. _____                          | 6. _____ |

**DOCUMENTATION**

Accessible Documentation Not Filed with the Site File - including field notes, analysis notes, photos, plans and other important documents

- |                            |                                |
|----------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 1) Document type _____     | Maintaining organization _____ |
| Document description _____ | File or accession #'s _____    |
| 2) Document type _____     | Maintaining organization _____ |
| Document description _____ | File or accession #'s _____    |

**RECORDER INFORMATION**

Recorder Name Jeannette Remington Affiliation City of Gainesville

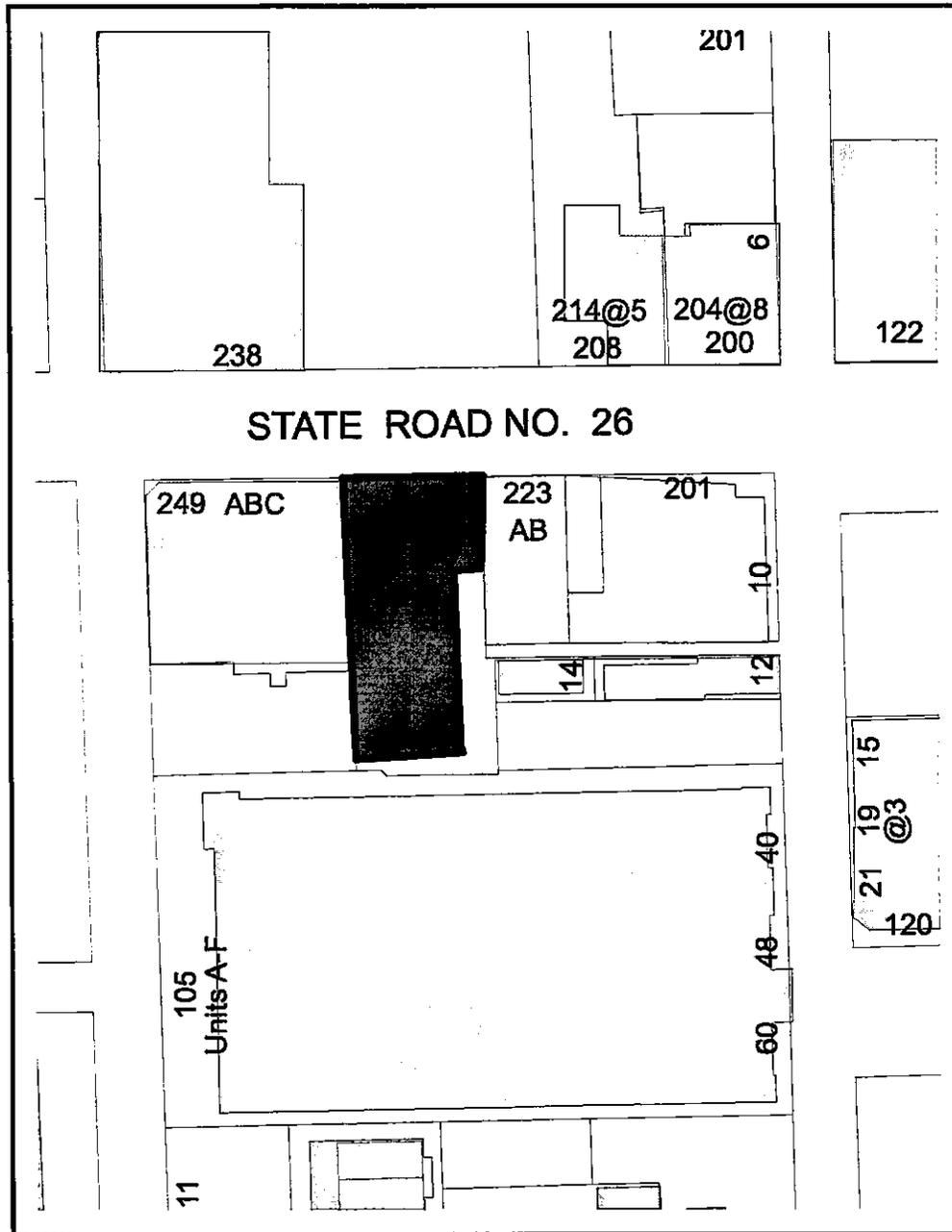
Recorder Contact Information \_\_\_\_\_  
 (address / phone / fax / e-mail)

**Required Attachments**

- ① USGS 7.5' MAP WITH STRUCTURE LOCATION PINPOINTED IN RED
- ② LARGE SCALE STREET, PLAT OR PARCEL MAP (available from most property appraiser web sites)
- ③ PHOTO OF MAIN FACADE, ARCHIVAL B&W PRINT OR DIGITAL IMAGE FILE  
 If submitting an image file, it must be included on disk or CD AND in hard copy format (plain paper is acceptable). Digital image must be at least 1600 x 1200 pixels, 24-bit color, jpeg or tiff.

# City of Gainesville

## Downtown Comericial District



Parcel Boundary Site File Number 8AL01292

Florida Master Site File Number 8AL01292

N



100 50 0 100 Feet

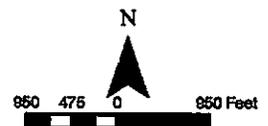
Prepared by the City of Gainesville  
Dept of Planning & Development Services, March 2012

Gainesville, Florida

# City of Gainesville Downtown Gainesville Business District



**USGS Locator**  
**Florida Master Site File Number 8AL01292**



**Parcel From:** 12948-000-000

**Parcel Thru:** 12948-000-000

**Search Date:** 2/1/2012 at 3:06:29 PM

**Data updated:** 02/01/12

**What Can \$3 Get You?** [mouse over]

Coffee? Gal. Gas? 829 Credit Score Get Started

**Parcel:** [12948-000-000](#) - [GIS Map \(best viewed with IE\)](#)

<p><b>Taxpayer:</b> CINQUE HOLDINGS INC</p> <p><b>Mailing:</b> % NAUTILUS REALTY INC 4623 NW 53RD AVE GAINESVILLE, FL 32653</p> <p><b>Location:</b> 233 W UNIVERSITY AVE Gainesville</p> <p><b>Sec-Twn-Rng:</b> 5-10-20</p> <p><b>Use:</b> NIGHT CLUBS</p> <p><b>Tax Jurisdiction:</b> Gainesville 3600</p> <p><b>Area:</b> Dwtwn Main &amp; University</p> <p><b>Subdivision:</b></p>	<p><b>Legal:</b> COM 120 FT E OF SE COR OF UNIVERSITY AVE &amp; SW 3RD ST RUN S 166.8 FT E 60 FT N 67.8 FT E 20 FT N 99 FT W 80 FT TOPOB OR 1589/255 ALSO 9 FT STRIP S OF ABOVE DESC &amp; STRIP ADJ TO SELY 67.8 FT &amp; PART OF ALLEY TO SW 2ND ST AKA PARCEL4 MSD BK 2 PG 50 OR 3443/0137</p>
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Lot

CLOG  
FREE

2024 879B



The Great Southern Music Hall

concert

YEX CRITTER  
&  
XTC

2024-879B

4

3

1. Great Southern Music Hall  
(Florida Theatre)
2. Gainesville, FL
3. Byrne, Ann
4. August, 1980
5. FDAHRM
6. Entrance facade

8A4-1292



FORUM SATURDAYS  
MARCH 27  
LAIDBACK LUKE  
MAGIC CITY SUN

Florida  
Theater of  
Gainesville

Florida  
Theater of  
Gainesville

FORUM SATURDAYS  
MARCH 27  
LAIDBACK LUKE  
MAGIC CITY

2024-879B



WALTER MARY  
JONES CONNOLLY MARTIN  
GREAT VICTOR HERBERT

FLORIDA

WALTER MARY  
JONES CONNOLLY MARTIN  
GREAT VICTOR HERBERT