



STAFF REPORT

City of Gainesville Historic Preservation Board

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:	<p>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).</p> <p>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</p>



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



HISTORIC PRESERVATION BOARD

September 10, 2024

PUBLIC HEARING 3, Historic Designation of Florida Theater

EXHIBIT 1

Map of 233 West University Avenue

Source: Department of Sustainable Development Interactive Map

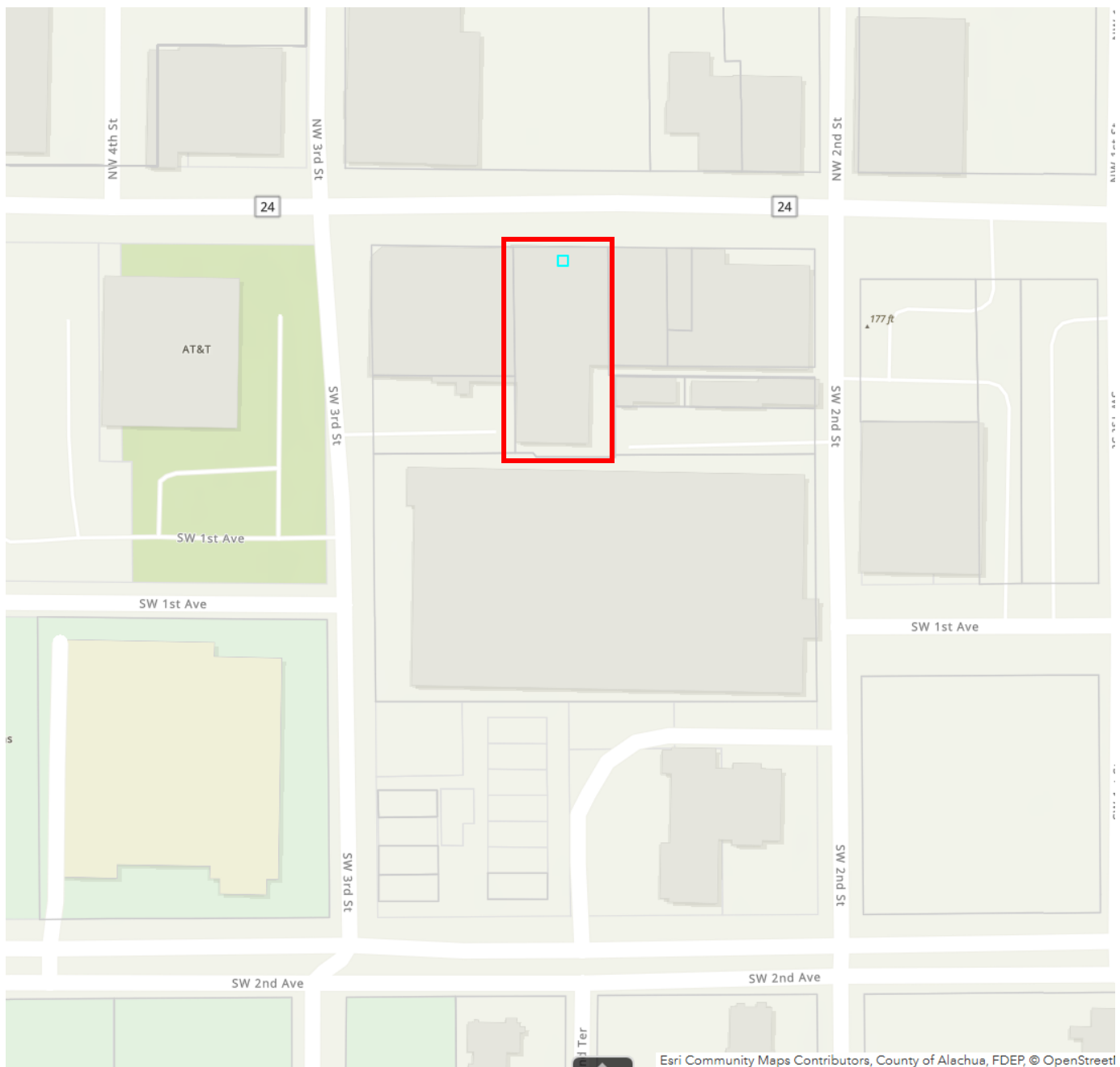


EXHIBIT 2

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 ☐ Excellent 863 = = Check One or More ☐ Altered 858 = = Present Use entertainment 850 = =

☒ Good 863 = = ☐ Unaltered 858 = = Dates: Beginning c.+1920 844 = =

☐ Fair 863 = = ☐ Original Site 858 = = Culture/Phase American 840 = =

☐ Deteriorated 863 = = ☐ Restored () (Date: X) 858 = = Period 20th century 845 = =

☐ Moved () (Date: X) 858 = =

NR Classification Category: building 916 = =

Threats to Site:

Check One or More

☐ Zoning (X) 878 = = ☐ Transportation (X) 878 = =

☐ Development (X) 878 = = ☐ Fill (X) 878 = =

☐ Deterioration (X) 878 = = ☐ Dredge (X) 878 = =

☐ Borrowing (X) 878 = =

☐ Other (See Remarks Below): 878 = =

Areas of Significance: architecture, local history 910 = =

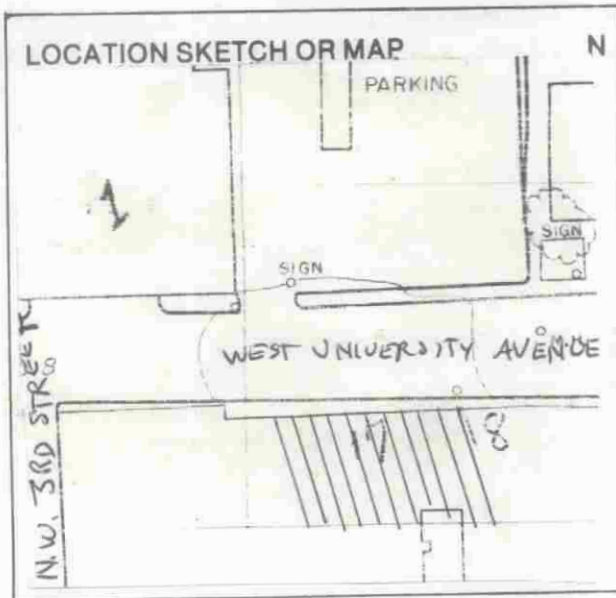
Significance:

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 = =

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:

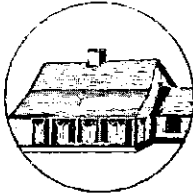
Zone _____ Easting _____ Northing _____ 890 ==

Photographic Records Numbers 32d 16, 17 860 ==

Contact Print



Page 1

☐ 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: 233 W University Avenue
 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 ¼ 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 _____ <input type="checkbox"/> Owner Objection	SHPO - Appears to meet criteria for NR listing: <input type="checkbox"/> yes <input type="checkbox"/> no <input type="checkbox"/> insufficient info Date _____ Init. _____ 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</i> 15, p. 2)
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HISTORICAL STRUCTURE FORM

Site #8 AL01292

DESCRIPTION (continued)

Chimney: No. _____ Chimney Material(s): 1. _____ 2. _____ 3. _____
 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)

☒ FMSF record search (sites/surveys) ☐ library research ☐ building permits ☒ Sanborn maps
☒ FL State Archives/photo collection ☐ city directory ☐ occupant/owner interview ☒ plat maps
☒ property appraiser / tax records ☐ newspaper files ☐ neighbor interview ☐ Public Lands Survey (DEP)
☐ cultural resource survey (CRAS) ☐ historic photos ☐ interior inspection ☐ HABS/HAER record search
☐ 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. Architecture 3. Performing arts/theater 5. _____
 2. Entertainment/recreation 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

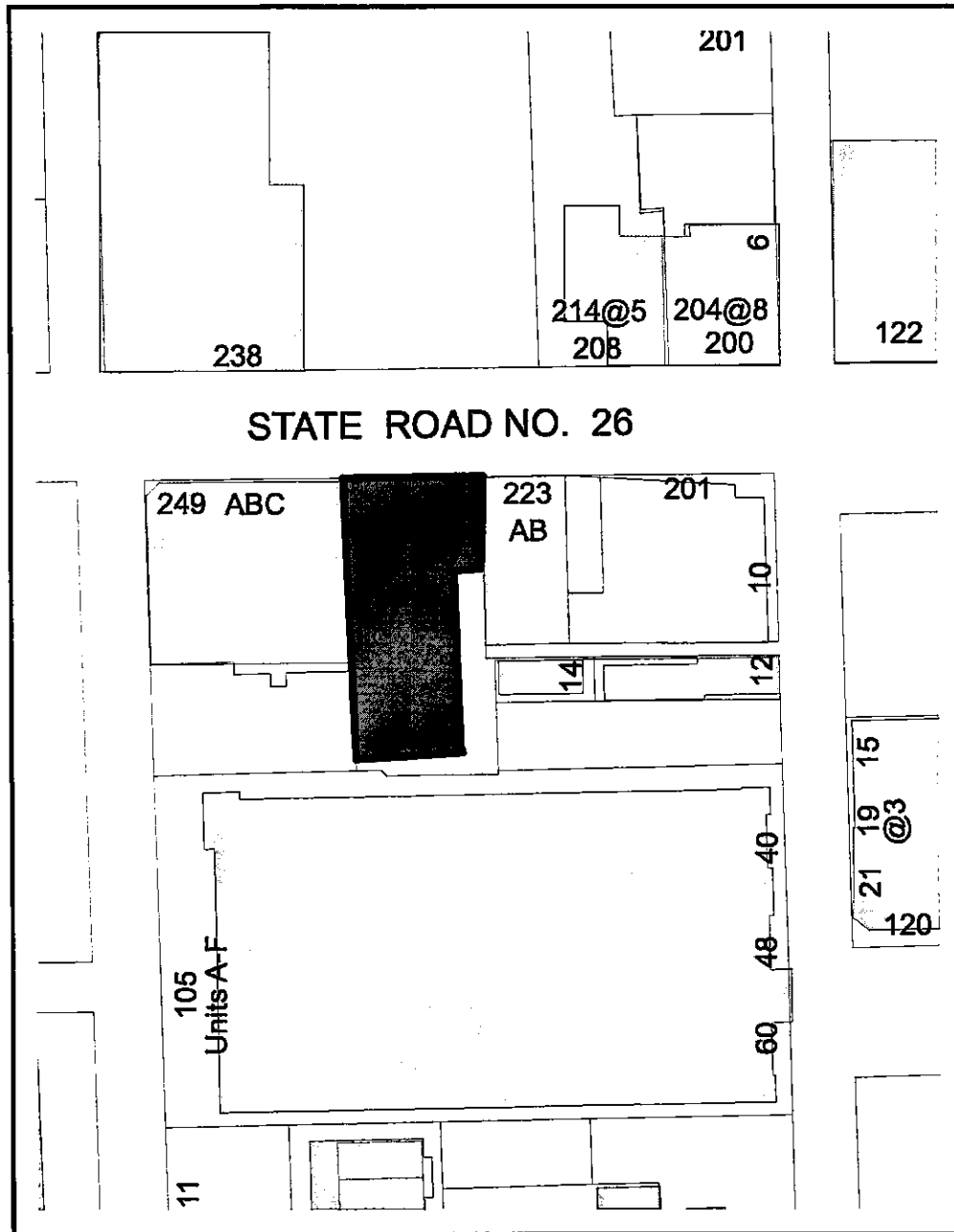
Recorder Name Jeannette Remington Affiliation City of Gainesville
 Recorder Contact Information _____
 (address / phone / fax / e-mail)

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



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

Gainesville, Florida



USGS Locator
Florida Master Site File Number 8AL01292



Prepared by the City of Gainesville
Dept of Planning & Development Services, February 2011
Gainesville, Florida

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? <small>[mouse over]</small>	 <small>Coffee?</small>	 <small>Gal. Gas?</small>	 <small>829</small>	 <small>Credit Score</small>
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Parcel: 12948- GIS Map (best
000-000 viewed with IE)

Taxpayer: CINQUE HOLDINGS INC	Legal: COM 120 FT E OF SE COR OF UNIVERSITY
Mailing: % NAUTILUS REALTY INC 4623 NW 53RD AVE GAINESVILLE, FL 32653	AVE & 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 & STRIP ADJ TO SELY 67.8 FT & PART OF ALLEY TO SW 2ND ST AKA PARCEL4 MSD BK 2 PG 50 OR 3443/0137
Location: 233 W UNIVERSITY AVE Gainesville	
Sec-Twn-Rng: 5-10-20	
Use: NIGHT CLUBS	
Tax	
Jurisdiction: Gainesville 3600	
Area: Dwtwn Main & University	
Subdivision:	



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

8AL1292



2024-879B

