

**Department of Sustainable Development**

Thomas Center, Building B
306 NE 6th Avenue
Gainesville, FL 32601
cogplanning@cityofgainesville.org

The City of Gainesville, Florida
Hereby issues this

☒ HISTORIC PRESERVATION BOARD

☐ PRESERVATION STAFF

CERTIFICATE OF APPROPRIATENESS (COA)

COA 22-000126

ISSUED TO: City of Gainesville

ADDRESS: 516 NE 2nd Avenue

**APPROVED
WORK:** Demolition of the Thelma Boltin Center with Conditions

CONDITIONS: ***Condition 1:*** The existing historic auditorium portion shall not be demolished. It shall be restored to its original condition, including the restoration of the original windows. The potential to remove the drop ceiling to expose the impressive rafter beams shall be explored.

Condition 2: A new wing, in the proposed alternate wing location, shall be designed to be comparable to the existing diagonal (eastern) wing in terms of design, materials, size, scale, and massing so as not to overpower the existing historic auditorium. The new wing design shall come back to the Historic Preservation Board for final approval.

Please be advised that it is the owner and/or agent's responsibility to notify staff of any intended changes to the project from what was approved. Failure to do so may result in a Stop Work order and additional fees and penalties as provided for by Code.



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Condition 3: The concept of slightly expanding the gymnasium building to the rear to accommodate the backstage (or “Back of House”) facilities shall be allowed, with final designs to come back to the Historic Preservation Board for final approval.

Condition 4: To the greatest extent possible, trees on site shall be preserved and protected from ongoing construction.

Condition 5: Gallery space shall be provided in the high traffic areas of the new lobby/wing or in the restored portion to highlight the story of the Gainesville Servicemen’s Center and Thelma Boltin. The gallery space shall include historic photographs and memorabilia that span the many decades of historic moments that occurred in this building.

BOARD DATE: 12/6/2022

ISSUE DATE: 12/8/2022

EXPIRATION DATE: 12/8/2023

ISSUED BY:

Kathleen Kauffman
Historic Preservation Officer

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STAFF REPORT

City of Gainesville Historic Preservation Board

AGENDA ITEM: Public Hearing 1
Petition COA22-000126

ADDRESS/PARCEL: 516 NE 2nd Avenue, Thelma Boltin Center
14748-000-000

**DESIGNATION/
CLASSIFICATION:** Local: Northeast Historic District (Duckpond), contributing
Federal: Northeast Residential Historic District (8AL00543)

**DATE OF
CONSTRUCTION:** 1943 (Alachua County Property Appraiser)

OWNER: City of Gainesville

**PROPERTY
DESCRIPTION:** The Thelma Boltin Center (the former Gainesville Servicemen's Center) is located at 516 NE 2 Avenue and is 8,126 square feet. The building is comprised of two parts, a voluminous one-story main gymnasium/theater with stage space that runs north and south along NE 5th Street, and a wing that sits at a northwest/southeast orientation diagonally off the main structure, to the east of the gymnasium and angles out towards NE 2nd Avenue. This wing contains some second-floor space as well, though the gymnasium is still taller in height.

Built of concrete block with plaster and brick, it features an asphalt shingle gable roof over the main gymnasium space and a flat roof over the adjoining wing.

The simple masonry construction was typical of utilitarian government buildings constructed by the Federal Works Agency during World War II. The most striking architectural features are the historic wood windows which provide extensive light into the western (gymnasium) portion of the building. The fenestration on the west side includes window bays separated by engaged pilasters, and each window configuration is



composed of a pair of adjoining 6/6 double hung sash, with a fixed six-lite window over each window in the operable pair.

The main entrance into the gymnasium/stage is currently through the south side, another entrance on the east side enters into the wing. Other notable elements include the flat concrete canopies over the entrances, the slatted vents in the gable eaves, and the molded cornice.

The property was listed as a contributing structure in the locally designated historic district (1985) and is a part of the Northeast Gainesville Residential District in the National Register of Historic Places, designated on February 12, 1980. The National Register nomination determined that the district was significant for community planning and development, architecture, and exploration and settlement.

**PROJECT
DESCRIPTION:**

The application proposes demolishing the original structure and replacing it with a new building in the same architectural style. The interior layout is planned to be re-designed to create more functional programming space for the community.

**DEMOLITION
CRITERIA:**

The criteria for reviewing demolition requests are found in Section 30-4.28(F)(3) of the Historic Preservation Ordinance (within the Land Development Code).

3. *Review criteria for demolitions.* A decision by the historic preservation board approving or denying a certificate of appropriateness for the demolition of buildings, structures, or objects [other than those in the Pleasant Street Historic District] shall be guided by:

- a. The historic or architectural significance of the building, structure or object;
- b. The importance of the building, structure or object to the ambience of a district;
- c. The difficulty or the impossibility of reproducing such a building, structure or object because of its design, texture, material, detail or unique location;



- d. Whether the building, structure or object is one of the last remaining examples of its kind in the neighborhood, the county or the region;
- e. Whether there are definite plans for reuse of the property if the proposed demolition is carried out, and what the effect of those plans on the character of the surrounding area would be;
- f. Whether reasonable measures can be taken to save the building, structure, or object from collapse; and
- g. Whether the building, structure or object is capable of earning reasonable economic return on its value.

DEMOLITION

CRITERIA

ASSESSMENT:

Criterion a. Based on Federal and local preservation criteria for evaluation, the building retains historic significance in more than one category: (a) it is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of the community's history, and (b) the building is associated with the lives of significant persons in our past.

The Federal Works Agency was created by President Franklin D. Roosevelt to administer public construction, building maintenance and public work relief functions between 1939 and 1949. The Agency provided the funds in the amount of \$45,000 for the Gainesville Servicemen's Center, and construction began on Monday, December 14, 1942 (Proposed Center, p. 1). The Federal Works Agency awarded the contract to P. D. Prevatt, a local contractor, after he submitted a sealed bid for \$36,105. Prevatt was given 120 days to complete the building (Recreation Center Will Start, p. 1) using plans drawn by local architect Sanford Goin (though a Jacksonville architect, Mellon Greely, took over when Goin joined the U.S. Navy). The building was dedicated on July 23, 1943 by Senator Claude Pepper (Historic Marker text).

Florida's people and her resources were drawn on heavily for the war effort. More than 250,000 Floridians volunteered or were drafted into the armed forces (Florida Memory Project). During the war, more than 170 military installations were established in Florida, including major bases like Camp Blanding in Starke and Alachua Army Airfield just 4 miles north of Gainesville. Soldiers were desperate for entertainment on their few days off and needed basic necessities they were not always sure to be provided on base.



The ballroom and stage were used to entertain the servicemen with concerts, plays, and dances with the local women. The soldiers could relax in the large library/reading room, get stamps and send off mail, make long distance phone calls from the three telephone booths, pick up one of the many instruments that had been donated, or play ping pong or snooker. They could take advantage of the free shaving equipment, the use of an iron, or free soap and towels in the shower facilities. Outside activities included badminton, shuffleboard, and barbeque facilities. The Center based in Gainesville drew from all the surrounding bases and airfields, and it had a tremendous local impact. It is estimated that on any given weekend, as many as 2000 servicemen came through the Gainesville Servicemen's Center (Thelma Boltin stop, Matheson Museum tour).

Not even a year after the facility was completed, the Center served 400 Thanksgiving meals to servicemen, including some personnel from the Orlando and Mountbrook Air Bases (City Fetes Servicemen, p. 1). Noted as the "busiest place in town," the Center served as a "home away from home" for many who couldn't be with their families for the holidays.

After the War, the Gainesville Servicemen Center was purchased back by the City of Gainesville for \$12,500 in 1946 (Explore Alachua County). The Center became a Rec Center, and then a Senior Center for some time during the 1970s. In recent years before the building was shuttered, the Thelma Boltin Center was used by community groups for classroom and theater space, and the City often hosted public workshops, town halls, and other events. It even served as a voting precinct.

The building is also significant historically because of its association with Thelma Boltin, an educator, theater director, and Florida folklife activist.

Thelma Ann Boltin (1904-1992) was an affable and outgoing woman who had a gift for storytelling (Glamsch, p. 1). Her family came to Gainesville in 1907 when she was three years old, and her father opened the Coca-Cola Bottling Company (Grey, Thelma Boltin). After graduating from Gainesville High School, she studied English, drama, and speech at Emerson College in Boston, and became particularly interested in folklore. She returned to Gainesville to teach speech and drama at Gainesville High and was the first certified high school public speaking teacher in the state of Florida (Grey, Thelma Boltin).



She was the Gainesville Servicemen's Center program director and organized all the events and entertainment for the Center, which was open seven days a week from 10 am to 11 pm (Explore Alachua County). She took great pride in coordinating the full roster of dances, variety shows, plays, sing-alongs, and other activities for the many men and women who came through the Center. She felt an almost motherly sentiment for these young people who were unsure whether they were going off to war, and she wanted to make the Servicemen's Center a place they could be themselves.

After the War, Thelma stayed on with the Board of Public Instruction and the City of Gainesville as the Director of the (now called) Recreation Center. Thelma organized the teen club and went back to her theater roots. She was the Director of the Children's Creative Theater and helped found the Gainesville Little Theater (now the Gainesville Community Playhouse). She was a charter member of the Junior Welfare League in Gainesville and served as President of the Pilot Club (Grey, Thelma Boltin). She served as Chair of the Florida and National Federation of Music Clubs.

By 1956, Thelma was semi-retired but did not slow down on the Florida folklore and folklife endeavors. She helped found the annual Florida Folk Festival in White Springs and served as its Director from 1954-1965 (Florida Memory, Thelma Boltin). The Florida Folk Festival, now in its 71st year, is a three-day celebration of the music, dance, stories, crafts and food that make Florida unique.

She traveled all over the state looking for treasured stories of Florida pioneers and early residents. As she put it: "I went out looking for the people who knew the old ways, the family songs, the stories, the superstitions, the sayings, the remedies, the handed-down recipes and beliefs of days gone by," (Morris, p. 1) Even more amazing is that she did all this using public transportation. Thelma Boltin never owned a car, never cared to drive. She knew most of the Greyhound bus drivers, and it was these drivers who pointed her to where she could find the "old families;" those who made their living turpentineing, or the man who was famous for his hand-made cattle whips, or the Seminole medicine men.

Her unique way of storytelling and sharing Florida folklore soon earned her the name "Cousin Thelma," and she could often be seen in her pioneer dress and bonnet sharing stories of early Florida life to hundreds of school



children and civic organizations. In 1985, she was awarded the Florida Folk Heritage Award from the State of Florida.

The City of Gainesville renamed the former Gainesville Service Center the Thelma A. Boltin Center in her honor on April 23, 1991. She passed away a year later in December of 1992 and is buried in the historic Evergreen Cemetery.

Criterion b. Whether the building contributes to the ambience of the district.

The Thelma Boltin Center possesses integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling and association. This means that since its construction, the building has not been moved out of its historic context and retains its original setting in the southern portion of the Northeast Historic District. The Center is mostly surrounded by single family homes yet is still close to other commercial and government buildings, including City of Gainesville City hall (two blocks away) and the Alachua County School Board's Administrative Building (the former Kirby Smith School). The Thelma Boltin Center has served an important function for the local community for over 79 years and is an integral part of the historic district.

Criterion c. The difficulty or the impossibility of reproducing such a building, structure or object because of its design, texture, material, detail or unique location.

The Thelma Boltin Center site presents a couple of different challenges. A portion of the project area lies within the FEMA Flood Zone A. The current grading of the site also creates a drainage flow eastward along the southside of the building and flows directly against the foundation (Chen Moore and Associates report, p. 2). Due to the unevenness in the sidewalks and concrete areas around the building, drainage ponding and even some washing out near the western access stairs has occurred.

There are a series of recommended improvements that can fix these environmental challenges including positive drainage (regrading,) up-sized culverts, and installing raised planters.

If the building were demolished, there is the ability to reproduce the existing building's design, but construction with today's building codes and



material costs would potentially be much costlier than retrofitting a building that is already in place with suitable code-compliant solutions.

It is not impossible to restore and reuse the existing historic windows, even if it were to be a reconstructed building. A window restoration firm out of Orlando, Austin Historical, has provided a cost estimate for restoring 41 windows in the building, with a total of 412 individual lites, at a cost of \$141,061.00. This equates to (roughly) \$3,400 per window for repair and restoration (noting that not all windows are the same size).

Criterion d. Whether the building is one of the last remaining examples of its kind in the neighborhood, the county or the region.

The Thelma Boltin Center is certainly the only one of its kind within this neighborhood and within the City.

The “Living New Deal” is an organization started by UC Berkeley that researches and educates the public on New Deal public works and civic buildings. Their website is a clearinghouse for information from around the country. According to this organization, there are only 205 remaining New Deal buildings within Florida, and within Gainesville, only 8 buildings remain. None of the other seven have a design or historic context similar to the Gainesville Servicemen’s Center.

Criterion e. Whether there are definite plans for reuse of the property if the proposed demolition is carried out, and what the effect of those plans on the character of the surrounding area would be.

The City wants to continue the use of the property as a community center and is proposing a “reconstruction” of the existing gymnasium portion. An all-new wing in a reconfigured position, moving it towards the rear of the gymnasium structure, would be expanded to accommodate larger class sizes for workshops and dance/theater classes.

It is not certain that this scenario would have a much bigger impact on the surrounding area or to the residents, or if so, to what extent. No traffic study has been done to date. Before its closure, and in its heyday, the Thelma Boltin Center has traditionally supported large events such as weddings, musical concerts, and theatrical performances, and parking was



somehow managed. The local neighborhood has co-existed with the current (and proposed) use for almost 80 years.

Criterion f. Whether reasonable measures can be taken to save the building, structure, or object from collapse.

Reasonable measures have already been taken to prevent the building from collapsing.

The Thelma Boltin Center was closed at the end of February 2020, at the start of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Almost a year later, a structural engineering firm (Sputo and Lammert Engineering) visited the site in January 2021, at the request of City staff. At this time, the roof over the auditorium stage was observed to have sagged approximately 8 to 12 inches. The truss over the stage was also determined to have catastrophically failed. It was recommended that the trusses be properly shored up to prevent collapse.

In March of 2021, the City of Gainesville had support scaffolding installed throughout the entire auditorium portion of the building. A site visit by the same structural engineering firm in April 2021 confirmed that the failed truss had been shored properly.

A third visit later that same month (April 2021) was to observe other roof trusses for damage. There was potential drywood termite activity detected throughout most trusses. The truss closest to the south wall had appeared to be repaired in the past, including a new steel bracket attached to the masonry wall to support the east end of the truss.

The final recommendations made by Sputo and Lammert Engineering (in a report dated six months later in October 2021) provided several options to the City, one being to “make repairs to the existing truss roof structure and to retain the masonry walls”. The report goes on to state that “it may be necessary to remove and replace the entire roof structure.”

The report finishes with a statement that complete demolition and replacement of the auditorium wing may be the most cost-effective path to pursue. Even this structural engineer, who was not looking at this project through a historic preservation lens, provided options that allowed



the building to be saved and offered measures to take that would prevent eventual collapse.

The City of Gainesville has been paying for this scaffolding for over a year and is intent on removing it to prevent further cost burdens. The firm that was hired to do the restoration assessment, REG Architects, has indicated that the bulk of that scaffolding is unnecessary; it truly is needed over the stage where the failing trusses are, but the rest of the costly scaffolding could be removed from the building.

Criterion g. Whether the building, structure or object is capable of earning reasonable economic return on its value.

This criterion is not entirely applicable. Whether as a restoration or as a demolition and reconstruction, the City fully intends to return this property to public use as a community center, a use which provides one of the most valuable returns on any public investment.

There has been an allocation of \$3 million dollars to put towards the Thelma Boltin Center project. However, no actual figures have yet been provided to the Historic Preservation Board as to what the new construction would cost, if that cost also requires whole-building demolition, debris hauling and site regrading costs.

A report prepared by REG Architects included an existing conditions assessment, the conceptualization of ADA accessibility, a structural analysis, a civil analysis and a complete restoration plan of the building compliant with local and federal historic preservation standards. This report included actual cost estimates and a timeline for construction.

At the low end, the estimated project cost is \$4.8 million, a medium estimate came in at \$5.5 million, and a high estimate was provided of \$6.2 million.

Though the low estimate is \$1.8 million over the \$3 million that has been allocated, without seeing an estimated project cost and budget breakdown, it is difficult to determine if \$3 million is an accurate projection.



Special category grants available from the Florida Division of Historical Resources are only available once a year, however, those grants allow eligible projects to request up to \$500,000 per application (and can be applied for the same project more than once, per project phase). If the City were to obtain one or two years of state preservation grants, the building's restoration (as envisioned in the REG Architects report) can provide a reasonable economic return on its value, as much as the demolition and new construction option would provide.

TIMELINE OF RECENT EVENTS

March 2000 – A repair/renovation permit was issued with a value of \$450,000.

August 2019 – Almost 20 years after the last big renovation to the Center, the Gainesville City Commission approves another renovation.

February/March 2020 – at the beginning of the Covid-19 pandemic, the Center is closed.

December 2020 – City staff notices a portion of the roof over the auditorium appears to have collapsed, or on verge of collapse.

January, March, and April 2021 – A structural engineer is hired to observe the structure and to make recommendations based on observed damage.

March 2021 – Scaffolding is installed throughout the gymnasium portion of the building.

October 2021 – the structural report is provided to the City; firm recommends either repairs, demolition of auditorium portion, or demolition of entire structure.

April 2022 – Gainesville City Commission directs Staff to work with Wannemacher Jensen Architects, Inc on a plan for the property.

May 2022 – City staff provided update to Historic Preservation Board; reminding Board that they already had an approved COA for renovations



from May 2021, but since that time the walls have started separating from the roof and the foundation appears to be undersized.

August 2022 – City staff provided update to Historic Preservation Board, stating they have Wannemacher Jensen Architects working on some ideas for a new building, and have reached out to REG Architects to put together cost proposal on a restoration. City’s Code Enforcement division declares the center a “Dangerous Building;” all utilities were disconnected from the building for safety reasons.

September 2022 – Board was presented some conceptual ideas by Wannemacher Jensen Architects. The Board felt the new wing proposals were not compatible with the auditorium’s replication. They wanted something that maintained the context of the surrounding historic neighborhood.

November 1, 2022 – REG Architects presents the architectural and structural assessment, and preservation/restoration options, with cost estimates and budget breakdown.

November 8, 2022 – City Staff applies for a COA to demolish the Thelma Boltin Center.

STAFF EVALUATION

Historic preservation Staff conducted several on-site reviews of the property. The current interior build-out of the diagonal wing of the building is compartmentalized and inefficient. There is little to no historic detailing in the interior of that wing to preserve.

Allowing for the demolition of the existing wing, and construction of a new wing further back towards the rear of the existing gymnasium could accomplish several challenges: it would provide additional square footage for more useful classroom and small event spaces, it would address any ADA deficiencies and provide a more elegant solution for ADA access to the building, and it would create more usable green space in front of the building for public use and enjoyment.

Current plans for the demolition and replication of the historic gymnasium include a small extension towards the back of the building to provide “back



of house,” or backstage, space. “Back of House,” or BOH, refers to the theater operations that are not visible to the audience, such as props management, costume, design, set fabrication, and dressing rooms. It is also where ADA lifts can be thoughtfully located.

**RECOMMENDATION
FROM STAFF:**

Staff recommends that application COA22-000126 for demolition of 516 NE 2nd Avenue be approved with the following conditions:

Condition 1: The existing historic auditorium portion shall not be demolished. It shall be restored to its original condition, including the restoration of the original windows. The potential to remove the drop ceiling to expose the impressive rafter beams shall be explored.

Condition 2: A new wing for the proposed alternate wing location shall be designed to be comparable to the existing diagonal wing in terms of design, materials, size, scale, and massing so as not to overpower the existing historic auditorium. The new wing design shall come back to the Historic Preservation Board for final approval.

Condition 3: The concept of slightly expanding the gymnasium building to the rear to accommodate the backstage (back of house) facility shall be allowed, with final designs to come back to the Historic Preservation Board for final approval.

Condition 4: To the greatest extent possible, trees on site shall be preserved and protected from ongoing construction.

Condition 5: Gallery space shall be provided in the high traffic areas of the new lobby/wing or restored portions to highlight the story of the Gainesville Servicemen’s Center and Thelma Boltin. The gallery space shall include historic photographs and memorabilia that span the many decades of historic moments that occurred in this building.

EXHIBIT 1: Map of the property
EXHIBIT 2: Photographs
EXHIBIT 3: COA Application



Department of Sustainable Development

PO Box 490 Station 11
Gainesville, FL 32627

"If I never did anything else worthwhile, I was happy to be in charge of that project [the Gainesville Servicemen's Center]. My gosh, we did the impossible."

Thelma Boltin, September 5, 1976

Bibliography

City Fetes Servicemen in Quiet Thanksgiving. The Gainesville Sun, November 26, 1943.

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Gainesville Servicemen's Center. Explore Historic Alachua County, www.explorealachuacounty.com.

Gainesville Servicemen's Center, Florida Heritage Site Marker. Division of Historical Resources, Florida Department of State, installed 2008.

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Morris, Bob. *Good Listener has Keen Ear for Old Ways.* Fort Myers News-Press, September 1, 1985.

Osgood, Nancy. *The Sweetheart of the Suwannee.* Tampa Bay Times, February 3, 1969.

Pinsky, Shelly. *State History Comes Alive in Cousin Thelma's Tales.* The Tampa Tribune, March 1, 1983.

Proposed Center for Gainesville Gets FWA Favor. The Gainesville Sun, September 14, 1942.

Recreation Center Construction Will Start Here Monday. The Gainesville Sun, December 13, 1942.

The Living New Deal. Department of Geography, University of California, Berkeley. www.livingnewdeal.org.

Thelma Boltin, 1902-1992. Florida Memory: State Library and Archives of Florida, Division of Library and Information Services, www.floridamemory.com.

Thelma Boltin Center, Stop 262#. Matheson History Museum Tour Stop, script by Joanna Grey Talbot. www.visitgainesville.com.

Tourist Envelopes Delivered To Center for Servicemen's Use. The Gainesville Sun, January 15, 1943.



Department of Sustainable Development

PO Box 490 Station 11

Gainesville, FL 32627

EXHIBIT 1

HISTORIC PRESERVATION BOARD

December 6, 2022

PUBLIC HEARING 1, Petition COA-22-000126

Map of 516 NE 2nd Avenue

Source: Department of Sustainable Development Interactive Map;

Pink buildings are contributing, blue are non-contributing

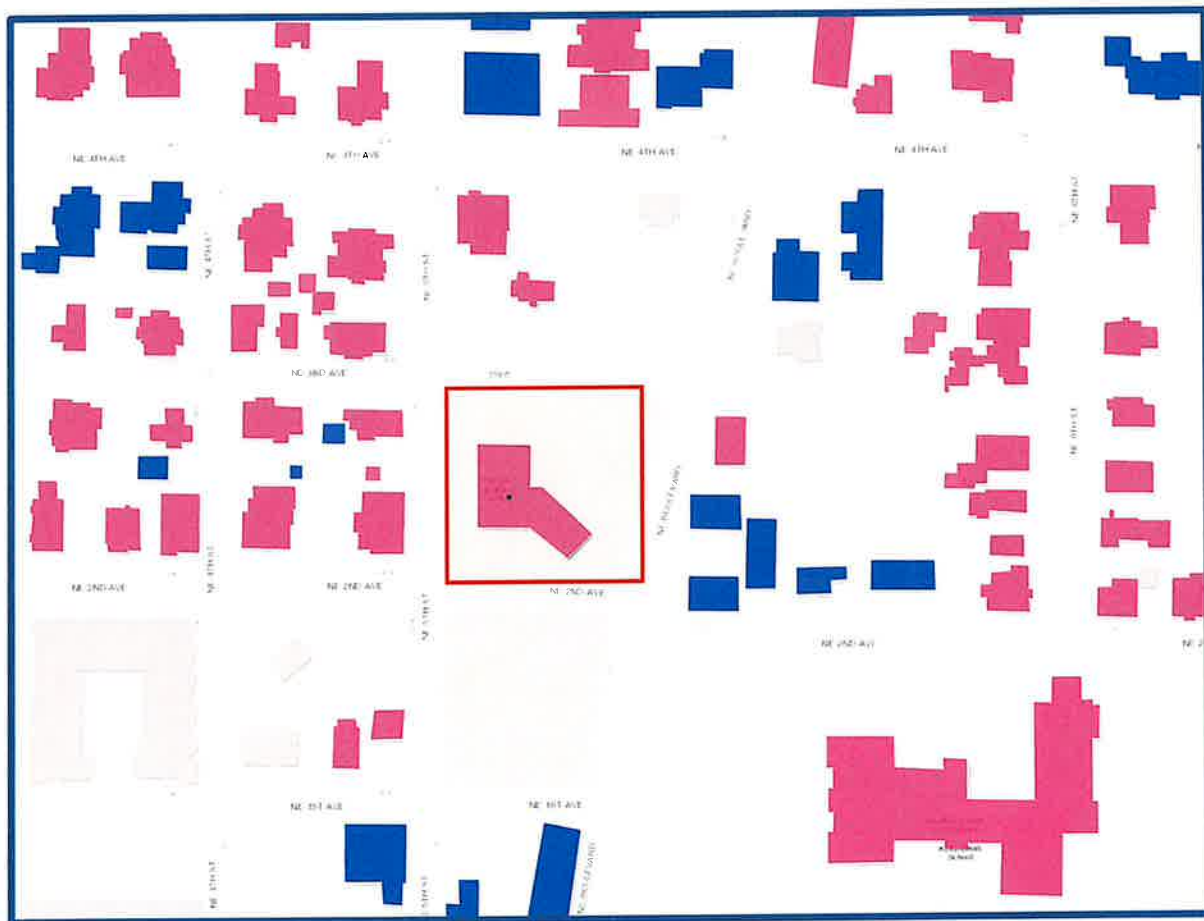
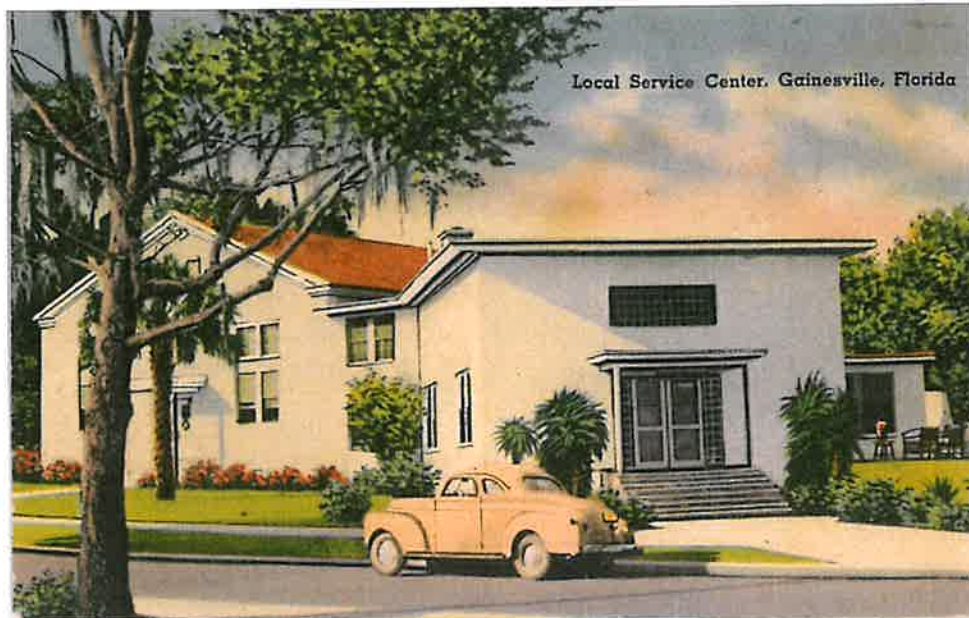


EXHIBIT 2: HISTORIC PHOTOGRAPHS and CURRENT PHOTOGRAPHS



Postcard of the Gainesville Local Service Center
Source: Matheson History Museum Collection



Two servicemen sitting outside the Gainesville Service Center
Source: Matheson History Museum Collection



One of the many dances held at the Gainesville Service Center, photo taken by Thelma Boltin, circa 1943
Source: Florida Memory Project



Servicemen at one of the dances in Gainesville Service Center
Source: Photo provided by Melanie Barr



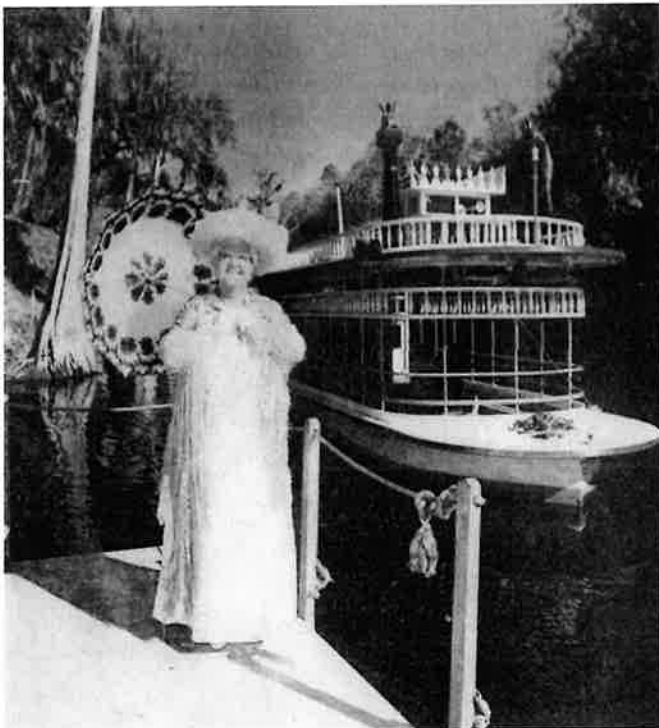
Servicemen gathered around the piano
Source: Photo provided by Melanie Barr



Concession stand at the Gainesville Servicemen's Center
Source: Photo provided by Melanie Barr



Thelma Boltin 1923 Gainesville
High School portrait
Source: Matheson History Museum Collection

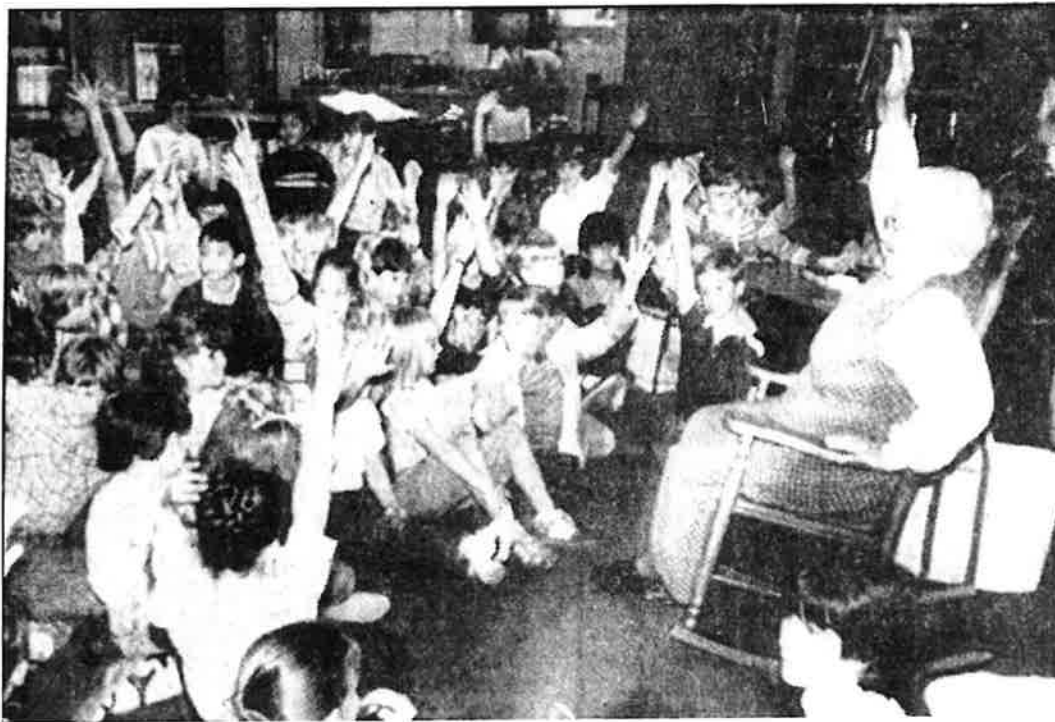


Thelma Boltin loved to tell tales of the famed
Suwannee River
Source: Tampa Bay Times, Feb 3, 1969



Thelma Boltin directing the 24th annual Florida Folk Festival

Source: The Tampa Tribune, Aug 29, 1976



Thelma Boltin with students at Pasco Elementary School

Source: The Tampa Tribune, March 1, 1983



Postcard of the back of the Gainesville Local Service Center
Source: Matheson History Museum Collection

SITE VISIT PHOTOS – MAY 15, 2022

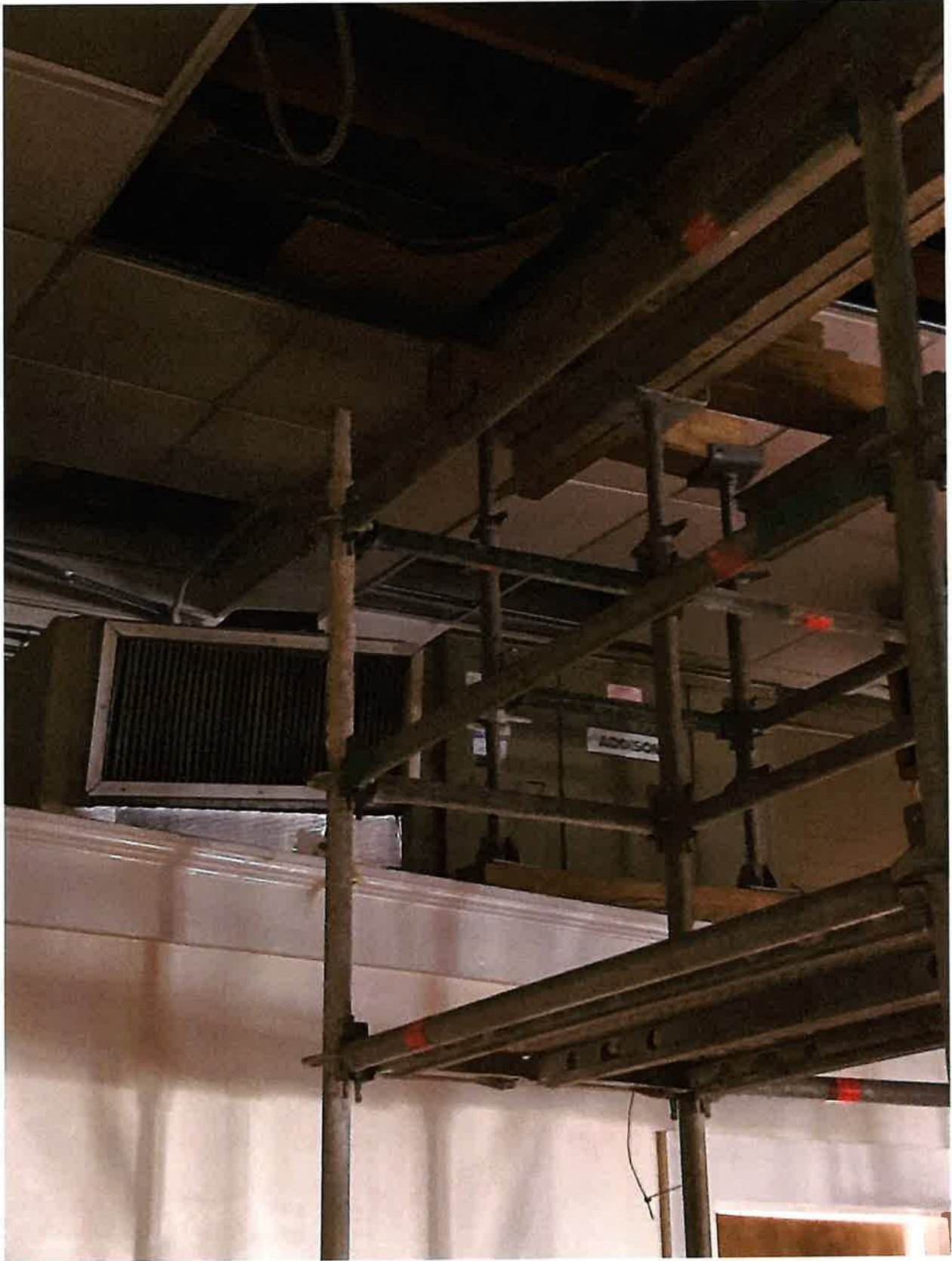














Kauffman, Kathleen

From: Lesley Gamble <hrhindness@mac.com>
Sent: Tuesday, December 6, 2022 11:31 AM
To: Kauffman, Kathleen
Cc: Melanie Barr; Lesley Gamble
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Thelma Boltin - please preserve and restore

Dear Ms. Kauffman

I am writing to ask the board to decide in favor of preserving and restoring the historic Thelma Bolton Center.

While there may appear to be some momentum generated by those who have vested interests in demolition and new construction, and the expansion of the building to create a larger "entertainment" venue, many of us who live close by and have enjoyed the smaller community scaled benefits of the TBC are very much opposed to a rebuild and expansion.

There are numerous and very strong reasons for this, primary among them the need to reverse the city's recent trend of allowing or actively destroying Gainesville's historic buildings and neighborhoods, particularly historic African American communities as well as neighborhoods that have offered housing for those of us with lower incomes across race, ethnicity, gender, and creed.

Gentrification and the destruction of historic buildings and communities all too often march hand in hand, resulting in great profits for some and grave losses for others.

Those losses can be tangible, like your home and the homes of family and friends — or your entire neighborhood.

They almost always include the destruction of established and often thriving ecologies of people and nature, including trees, plants and precious wild spaces that we tend to forget are the homes of many others, the flora and fauna humans require to live and breathe and thrive.

I've seen the proposed plans for the new and expanded Thelma Boltin. Although the design firm claims there will be no losses of trees, if you know the property intimately you can see clearly that trees will be sacrificed.

We will lose precious green areas, too, including a thriving community garden and a lawn where we often picnic on the grass and play on the old court. We will also lose a big piece of the most thriving residential wildlife habitat in the Duckpond.

What's the gain?

A larger "entertainment venue" that requires more parking lots, will generate more people, noise and pollution, and will destroy more natural habitat.

In an era of climate change and global warming, established trees and plants are far more valuable to our survival, health and well being than parking lots and more concrete.

In addition, the expansion of parking for a new TBC will contribute to more stormwater run-off and fewer plants to uptake the toxic residue into Sweetwater creek, which already suffers from too much pollution.

The plans for the proposed greenway, which is probably what the intentional neglect of the TBC was predicated on, also call for "cleaning up" the east side flood plain of the TBC property, which is exactly where the wildest and most thriving ecosystems are located.

Many of us residents marvel at the rich and unruly diversity of plant and animal life there. It thrives precisely because it's "unruly"- not managed and manicured like the city's "green spaces" with toxic chemicals that result in dead earth, which requires an endless cycle of fertilizers and pesticides. All of this ends up in our waterways and drinking water.

Historic preservation isn't just about buildings. Ultimately it's about preserving relationships, including the interdependent ecologies of culture and nature over time.

The demolition and construction of a new TBC engenders losses that are intangible, too.

There's the loss of the joy and peace we gain, especially in urban areas, of connecting with the earth and nature in a non-directed, quiet and relaxing place. The current scale of the TBC is a perfect match for the scale of our neighborhood. The current size of the building keeps "entertainment" at a neighborhood scale. Blessedly it's not Depot Park. Yet.

Demolition is also a dissolution of the stories that make our histories rich and complex, the stories that may or may not agree and give us pause to reflect, ask questions and connect more deeply with one another.

These stories inform how we think, feel and live - not only as individuals but also within broader circles of community. History isn't in the past- it lives in the now and shapes our lives and futures.

As Melanie Barr has pointed out, the history of the TBC honors our community's legacy of service, from the men who went off to war to those who strove to give them recognition and nurturance.

This history doesn't thrive on a plaque or in a book— it lives in the building and land itself, in the old stage and woodwork, the outdoor fireplace and shuffleboard court. That's how we keep history alive and continue to think and play, marvel and invent with it.

There are many more reasons to preserve the TBC. But I will conclude with an economic one.

We are in a national and global economic recession. No one can predict how wide or deep it is or will be. New prices in many areas of construction are up 30 percent. Demolishing and rebuilding the Thelma Boltin is going to cost an astronomical and ultimately untenable sum, especially in the context of the dire housing crisis in Gainesville.

Slow repair and preservation is a much more realistic, neighborhood-oriented and ultimately cost effective route, particularly at this time.

Slowing down the process gives everyone more time to connect over what the TBC means to us, as a neighbor, a neighborhood and a city.

Thank you
Lesley Gamble
32601

Sent from my iPhone

Kauffman, Kathleen

From: Leatha Holder <leathaholder@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, December 6, 2022 2:30 PM
To: Kauffman, Kathleen
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Thelma Boltin Center

Ms. Kauffman.

Please consider my remarks regarding the destruction of yet another Gainesville historic building, The Thelma Boltin Center.

My desire to protect the Thelma Boltin Center is an expression of my dismay that Gainesville has lost its identity. The Duckpond Neighborhood that I grew up in represents housing diversity with bungalows to stately homes. It is not a cookie cutter neighborhood where all houses are the same shade of beige. Among my fondest memories are those with my friends and cousins riding our bikes, playing softball at Kirby Smith, walking home from school, kool aid and cookies on our front porches.

The Thelma Boltin Center was dear to us as where we learned to mix and mingle, Friday night Teen Time with our very own local radio station DJ playing our requests. As an adult, our dance club met there as well as class of the 60s Valentine Dances and class reunions. Gainesville has a scarcity of venues for smaller groups that aren't exorbitantly expensive to rent. The Thelma Boltin Center fills that need.

Respectfully submitted,
Leatha Lovett Holder

Sent from my iPad

Kauffman, Kathleen

From: Susan Mickelberry <smickelb@att.net>
Sent: Tuesday, December 6, 2022 2:49 PM
To: Kauffman, Kathleen
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Thelma Bolton Center

Dear Katherine Kauffman and Historic Preservation Board,

I can't attend the meeting this evening but, hence this email. I would like to see the Thelma Bolton Center saved, not demolished. What a waste of architecture, history, and culture it would be to demolish this historic building and the beautiful surrounding area.

Of course I'm sad to say that I'm quite sure all those who show up and write to say this will be disappointed, because the City doesn't listen. It does what it wants.

Respectfully,
Susan Mickelberry
3702 NW 20th Place, Gainesville FL
42-year resident of Gainesville

Sent from AT&T Yahoo Mail for iPhone

Kauffman, Kathleen

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Sent: Tuesday, December 6, 2022 2:49 PM
To: Kauffman, Kathleen
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Thelma Bolton Center

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3702 NW 20th Place, Gainesville FL
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HISTORIC PRESERVATION BOARD (HPB)

Certificate of Appropriateness (COA) Application

USE THIS FORM TO

Apply for approval for projects located within historic districts. Projects may require either a Board-level review or a Staff-level review.

FEES

Once application is submitted it will be reviewed for completeness. Once verified complete, an invoice will be emailed to the applicant.

Type of Review	Fee	EZ Fee
Certificate of Appropriateness (COA): Staff Review	FREE	FREE
Certificate of Appropriateness (COA): Board Review - Single Family Structure or its Accessory Structure	\$127.50	\$63.75
Certificate of Appropriateness (COA): Board Review - All Other Structures	\$638.25	\$319.13
After-the-Fact Certificate of Appropriateness (COA): If work begun prior to issuance of a COA	\$473.25 + above applicable fee	\$473.25 + above applicable fee

BASIS FOR REVIEW

All applications, whether Staff or Board review, are reviewed for consistency with the City of Gainesville Comprehensive Plan, Land Development Code, and applicable guidelines such as the Guidelines for the Historic Districts are based on the U.S. Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation.

PROJECT TYPE:

- ☐ New Construction ☐ Addition ☐ Alteration ☒ Demolition ☐ Fence
☐ Relocation ☐ Repair ☐ Re-roof ☐ Sign ☐ Request to lift demolition delay
☐ Other: ☐ Amendment to COA (HP ____ - ____)

APPROVAL TYPE:

See [Certificate of Appropriateness Matrix](#)

☐ Staff Approval

☒ Board Approval: ☐ Conceptual or ☒ Final

PROPERTY INFORMATION: Property information can be found at the [Alachua County Property Appraiser's Website](#)

Historic District: ☒ Northeast (Duckpond) ☐ Southeast ☐ Pleasant Street
☐ University Heights (North) ☐ University Heights (South) ☐ Not in an HD

Site Address 516 NE 2nd Ave Gainesville, FL 32601

Parcel ID #(s) 14748-000-000

OWNER OF RECORD

As recorded with the [Alachua County Property Appraiser](#)

APPLICANT OR AGENT

If other than owner. If an agent will be representing the owner, an [Owner's Authorization For Agent Representation](#) form must be included

Owner(s) Name

Kristie Williams

Applicant Name

Peter McNiece

Company (if applicable)

CITY OF GAINESVILLE

Company (if applicable)

CITY OF GAINESVILLE

Street Address

PO BOX 490 MS 58

Street Address

306 NE 6th Street

City State Zip

Gainesville, FL 32627

City State Zip

Gainesville, FL 32601

Telephone Number

(352) 393-1848

Telephone Number

(352) 514-8992

E-Mail Address

WilliamsKA@gru.com

E-Mail Address

McNiecePR@GainesvilleFL.gov

Historic Preservation Board Meetings are held the 1st Tuesday of the month at 5:30PM in the City Commission Chambers (200 E. University Ave.)

Application Deadline (12:30PM)	Dec 07 2020	Jan 04 2021	Feb 01 2021	Mar 01 2021	Apr 05 2021	May 03 2021	Jun 07 2021	Jul 02 2021	Aug 02 2021	Sep 03 2021	Oct 04 2021	Nov 01 2021
Meeting Date	Jan 05 2021	Feb 02 2021	Mar 02 2021	Apr 06 2021	May 04 2021	Jun 01 2021	Jul 06 2021	Aug 03 2021	Sep 07 2021	Oct 05 2021	Nov 02 2021	Dec 07 2021

IMPORTANT NOTES



PRE-APPLICATION MEETING

To guide you through the process and to ensure that your application is properly processed, you'll need to meet with the Preservation Planner prior to submitting your application. This should be done prior to your anticipated submittal date to allow time for review.

Staff approval applications are accepted on a rolling basis and are generally completed within 5 business days. Please note that projects can only begin after receiving a Certificate of Appropriateness (COA) and a building permit (if required).



CONCEPTUAL APPROVALS

Conceptual approvals are provided by the HPB as a courtesy to the applicant in an effort to allow comment from the Historic Preservation Board during the conceptual design process. The HPB will provide the applicant with feedback and guidance relating to the proposal. In all cases, the applicant must return to the HPB to seek final approval of their projects. There is no additional fee for this review above the Certificate of Appropriateness fee.



APPLICATION REQUIREMENTS

- ☐ A complete/ signed application. (If all requirements are not submitted it could delay your approval);
- ☐ Proof of Ownership (copy of deed or tax statement);
- ☐ A current survey of the property, for new construction and any change to existing footprint. (no older than two years);
- ☐ 1 digital set of elevations & plans (to scale);
- ☐ Photographs;
- ☐ Any additional backup materials, as necessary;
- ☐ If applying as an agent, [Owner's Authorization for Agent Representation](#) form must be signed/ notarized and submitted as part of the application;
- ☐ For window replacement, a [Window Survey](#) must be completed.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

DESCRIBE THE PROPOSED PROJECT AND MATERIALS.

Describe the proposed project in terms of size, affected architectural elements, materials, and relationship to the existing structure(s).

Demolition of the existing Thelma Boltin Center and reconstruction of a new building in the same architectural style which honors the history of the existing center and the legacy of Thelma Boltin. The interior layout will be re-designed to create more functional programming space for the community.

List proposed materials:

Project Scope	Manufacturer	Product Description	Color (Name/Number)
Exterior Fabric		Match existing	
Doors			
Windows		Restored & reused	
Roofing		Match existing	
Fascia/Trim		Match existing	
Foundation			
Shutters			
Porch/Deck			
Fencing			
Driveways/Sidewalks			
Signage			
Other			

PLEASE SUBMIT ALL PRODUCT BROCHURES, PAINT COLOR SAMPLES, AND MATERIAL SAMPLES WITH YOUR APPLICATION.



DID YOU REMEMBER...

- ☐ Review the Historic District Application Checklist to ensure you are including all required materials. If all requirements are not submitted, it may delay your approval;
- ☐ Review the applicable Guidelines;
- ☐ Review the Secretary of the Interior's Standards;
- ☐ A pre-application meeting is required before a final application for Board Review can be processed. Please call 352 393-8686 to schedule an appointment.



Please see the City of Gainesville Code of Ordinances for detailed information:

- ☐ *Historic preservation/conservation overlay* – see Sec. 30-4.28.
- ☐ *Historic Preservation Board* – see Sec. 30-3.5.
- ☐ *Variances* – see Sec. 30-3.55.

The Code of Ordinances is available for review at

www.municode.com



APPEALS

Board Decisions - Persons with standing, as defined in Section 30-3.58(B) of the Land Development Code, may appeal a decision of the HPB, as outlined in Article III, Division 12 – *Appeals* of the land Development Code.

Administrative Decisions - Persons with standing, as defined in Section 30-3.57(B) of the Land Development Code, may appeal a decision of the HPB, as outlined in Article III, Division 12 – *Appeals* of the land Development Code.

DEMOLITIONS (If Applicable)

Please identify any unique qualities of historic and/or architectural significance, the prevalence of these features within the region, county, or neighborhood, and feasibility of reproducing such a building, structure, or object.

The existing windows will be fully restored and reused in the new building.

Discuss measures taken to save the building/structure/object from collapse. Also, address whether it is capable of earning a reasonable economic return on its value.

The roof is currently being supported by scaffolding. Code Enforcement has declared it a "Dangerous Building" and had all utilities disconnected as a safety precaution. Structural engineering report found numerous design and material failures which create the imminent risk of building collapse. REG Architects performed a feasibility study which determined that the building could be restored but at a cost of \$4.8 to \$6.2 million. Restoration of the facility is, therefore, not economically feasible.

RELOCATIONS (If Applicable)

For relocations, address the context of the proposed future site and proposed measures to protect the physical integrity of the building.)

Additional criteria for relocations and demolitions: Please describe the future planned use of the subject property once vacated and its effect on the historic context.

New building will mirror the architectural style of the existing center and complement the homes in the surrounding historic district. The proposed design has been through several iterations of review and comment by the Historic Preservation Board.

CERTIFICATION

By signing below, I certify that the information contained in this application is true and correct to the best of my knowledge at the time of the application. I acknowledge that I understand and have complied with all of the submittal requirements and procedures and have read and understand the following:

1. I/We hereby attest to the fact that the above supplied property address(es), parcel number(s) and legal description(s) is (are) the true and proper identification of the area of this petition.
2. I/We authorize staff from the Department of Sustainable Development to enter onto the property in question during regular city business hours in order to take photos which will be placed in the permanent file.
3. I/We understand that the COA review time period will not commence until the application is deemed complete by staff and may take up to 10 days to process. I further understand that an incomplete application submittal may cause my application to be deferred to the next posted deadline date.
4. I/We understand that, for Board review cases, an agenda and staff report will be available on the City's website approximately one week before the Historic Preservation Board meeting.
5. I/We understand that the Historic Preservation Board meetings are conducted in a quasi-judicial hearing and as such, ex-parte communications are prohibited (Communication about your project with a Historic Preservation Board member).
6. I/We understand that the approval of this application by the Historic Preservation Board or staff in no way constitutes approval of a Building Permit for construction from the City of Gainesville Building Department.
7. I/We understand that all changes to the approved scope of work stated in a COA have to be approved by the HPB before work commences on those changes. There will be no charge for a revision to a COA. Making changes that have not been approved can result in a Stop Work Order being placed on the entire project and/or additional fees/penalties.
8. I/We understand that any decision of the HPB may be appealed to the City Commission. Petitions to appeal shall be presented within thirty (30) days after the decision of the HPB; otherwise the decision of the HPB will be final.
9. I/We understand that Certificates of Appropriateness are only valid for **one (1) year** from issuance.

Peter McNiece

Digitaly Signed by Peter McNiece
DN: cn=Peter McNiece,
o=City of Gainesville,
ou=City of Gainesville,
c=US

11/08/2022

Applicant (Signature)

Date

Peter McNiece

Applicant (Print)



Please submit this application and all required supporting materials via email to

cogplanning@cityofgainesville.org

Once the application is received and deemed complete we will contact you regarding payment. For questions regarding application submission, please call

352 393-5022

TO BE COMPLETED BY CITY STAFF		Date Received 11/9/22	Received By: K Kauffman
COA-22-000126			
Zoning:	PS		
Contributing?	☒ Yes ☐ No	☐ Staff Approval — No Fee	
Pre-Conference?	☒ Yes ☐ No	☐ Single Family Structure or its Accessory Structure	
Application Complete	☒ Yes ☐ No	☐ Multi-Family requiring Board approval	
Enterprise Zone?	☒ Yes ☐ No	☐ Ad Valorem Tax Exemption	
Request for Modification of Setbacks?	☐ Yes ☒ No	☐ After-The-Fact Certificate of Appropriateness	
		☐ Account No. 001-660-6680-3405	
		☐ Account No. 001-660-6680-1124 (Enterprise Zone)	
		☐ Account No. 001-660-6680-1125 (Enterprise—Credit)	