

CITY OF ST. AUGUSTINE
Historic Architectural Review Board Workshop
February 19, 2009

The Historic Architectural Review Board met in formal session at 1:00 P.M., Thursday, February 19, 2009, in the Alcazar Room at City Hall, St. Augustine, Florida. Dana Ste. Claire, Chairperson called the meeting to order, and the following were present:

1. ROLL CALL:

Dana Ste. Claire, Chairperson
Len Weeks
Paul Weaver, III

Absent:

Fred Halback
Leslie Thomas

City Staff:

Ron Brown, City Attorney
Carlos Mendoza, Assistant City Attorney
David Birchim, Planning Manager
Tom Scofield, Historic Preservation Planner
Carly Mason, Recording Secretary

2. Presentation and discussion regarding substandard building in Lincolville
Joel McEachin, City of Jacksonville

Paul Weaver noted the importance of reviewing the policy and procedures for the historic districts. He introduced Joel McEachin, Preservation Planner, City of Jacksonville, who would provide a power point presentation. He said that Mr. McEachin primarily worked in the Springfield and Riverside areas of Jacksonville. He said the workshop was open for discussion, and the public was welcome to ask any questions.

Tom Scofield provided a brief background of Lincolville. He said the Lincolville National Register Historic District was created in 1991. He said at the time there were a total of 688 buildings, of which 548 were contributing. He stated that the Sanborn Maps dated to 1957 provided photos for that time frame. He explained that 695 buildings were built before 1930, 57 buildings were built after 1930, and 83 buildings were built between 1957 and

1991, and 64 buildings were demolished during those years. He noted that between 1991 - 2008 the Lincolville historic district was created. He reported that there were a total of 24 buildings that were demolished since the creation of the historic district. He said that currently there were a total of 664 buildings, of which 492 were contributing. He provided a list of addresses for the 35 contributing buildings that had been targeted as substandard. He said the board could go to www.thegreenestbuilding.org, which provided an energy calculator that could be used for demolition, new construction, or major renovation projects.¹

Joel McEachin, City of Jacksonville, provided an overview of substandard buildings located in Jacksonville, and he said in 1987 the Springfield district was listed on the national registry. He noted that the area had about 2,100 property owners. He said Fame Vernacular, Folk Victorian, Prairie, and Colonial Revivals were among some of the styles that were similar to Lincolville. He said that between 1987 – 1997 Springfield had no market for

¹ Addresses attached to original report

development, but from 1997 – 2006 people were buying houses and restoring them, and from 2006 – present time there was no market to restore the buildings. He said condemned properties were a safety concern throughout Springfield, and he indicated that there had always been tension between Chapter 307 (Historic Preservation) and Chapter 518 (Property Maintenance Code). He noted that Chapter 307 had an emergency clause that allowed a threatening building to be demolished without going before the board. He said the City would then place a lien on the property and would not be repaid until the property was sold.

Mr. Weaver questioned whether specific criteria was required to demolish the vacant buildings, such as a fire hazard or security issue.

Mr. McEachin said the decision could be made by the chief of the division. He noted that the decision was made carefully because the City would not be repaid until the property sold.

Mr. McEachin continued that if a resident requested removal of a structure, they would go before the City Commission for approval. He said the Commission could proceed with the demolition process, recommend mitigation action, or work with the Municipal Code Enforcement Division. He noted that boarding up buildings would not always stop people from entering. He said people could enter through a crawl space, cut a hole in the floor, and no one would be aware that someone was living in the building. He said Spar (Springfield Preservation and Revitalization) was a good example of a group that assisted with the restoration of the homes. He noted that in 1996 the City of Jacksonville held a Springfield Auction. He said the Preservation Department contacted homeowners to see if they would like to sell their property for restoration. He said the City had used gap financing to stimulate the neighborhood. He noted that the City of

Jacksonville used a new construction zoning regulation combined with historic homes that included parking requirements. He said reviews of demolitions were based on Chapter 307, which provided more consistency for staff recommendation, commission action and provided a procedure for demolition by neglect. He said the City of Jacksonville had ten criteria for demolition for consistency. He stated that the demolition matrix determined the cost of demolition, and provided the applicants with an estimate prior to demolition.

Gail Burnick, public speaker, questioned whether the homes that were purchased in the Springfield auction had to be repaired.

Mr. McEachin said that was all included in the package including rehabilitation of the properties.

Mr. Weaver asked if there were specific criteria to qualify for the emergency clause in Chapter 307. He said the historical value was a concern in St. Augustine, and he questioned whether anyone had challenged the ten criterion. He noted that Mr. Scofield had provided a report and summary of each structure in Lincolville. He requested a summary of the City of Jacksonville's policies. He asked if a company could renovate a structure that had a lien on it.

Mr. McEachin replied that renovation was possible with a lien on the property; however, work could not be performed if the lien was placed on the property due to back taxes. He said some of the areas in Jacksonville had zoning overlays to protect them from certain building designs.

Gail Burnick, Public speaker, asked about creating an overlay zone for Lincolville.

Mr. Ste. Claire asked if Ms. Burnick was still a member of the Lincolville Neighborhood Association and questioned why there was

no support for an overlay zone in Lincolnville.

Ms. Burnick said she had not attended neighborhood meetings recently because they were not properly noticed. She suggested that the public be educated about the zoning, and indicated that some neighbors were reluctant to change, due to past actions by the City. She said she felt that the City had a real interest in reviving the neighborhood and would like to see them educate the public. She asked if the City could partner with people seeking ownership of the homes to renovate.

Mr. Weaver said that he wished more residents had attended the workshop. He indicated that he handled the Lincolnville National Registry over 20 years ago when the residents were not ready for an overlay zone, primarily due to the cost. He noted that past meeting minutes would reflect that the board made every effort to salvage historical homes. He said the most important factor for the board was public safety. He suggested that Ms. Burnick speak to the City Commission regarding a partnership with the City.

8. Adjournment

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 2:02 P.M.

2

Dana Ste. Claire, Chairperson

² Transcribed by Carly Mason