



PRESS CONTACTS

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NEWS RELEASE

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Florida Trust's 11 Most Endangered Historic Sites

The Florida Trust for Historic Preservation announced their 2012 *11 Most Endangered Historic Sites* list at the Annual Statewide Preservation Conference, in Gainesville, on May 17, 2012. The sites are not ranked in any particular order. This is the 11th year of the Most Endangered Program and we are happy to report several major threatened sites to be saved during its course.

Fire Station # 5, Jacksonville

Fire Station #5 is the oldest and most recognized historic building on Riverside Avenue in downtown Jacksonville's Brooklyn neighborhood. It was designed by Robert Lee Sevil in 1910. The land on which the building stands was sold by the city to Fidelity National Financial, Inc. in 2009. The building is currently vacant, unmaintained, and has been the target of repeated vandalism. Some city officials are in support of the preservation of the building but are concerned over costs for relocation and rehabilitation. The site is added to the 2011 list due to the potential for demolition caused by redevelopment pressure.

Central Christian Church, Orlando

Central Christian Church was founded during Orlando's Land Boom Period of the 1920s. The two-story, Mission Revival building is a contributing structure in the Lake Eola Heights National Register Historic District. In 1999, the Diocese of Orlando was gifted the site; however, it has since been deemed unsafe for use. Local historic groups and members of the community are actively seeking ways to revitalize and preserve the building. The Lake Eola Heights Historic Neighborhood Association held a planning session this year where the next steps in preservation of the church were featured and outlined. The site is remaining on the list from last year due to the threat of demolition by neglect.

Downtown Palatka

In the 1850s, the city of Palatka was a major center for transportation, freight trade, cypress lumber, and citrus sales. The city continued to grow in reputation as the "Bass Capital" of the world, drawing avid fishermen and outdoor enthusiasts. The city provides many components which lead to a vibrant downtown – an active Main Street program, mixed-use zoning, building improvement and façade grant programs, and county and professional buildings downtown, however, several buildings downtown are on the point of collapse, and many have severe roofing or structural problems associated with years of neglect. The economic downturn coupled with a growing vacancy rate downtown is having a dire impact on this historic city.

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Coca Cola Bottling Plant, Ft. Lauderdale

Architect Courtney Stewart designed multiple identical Coca-Cola bottling plants throughout South Florida and this is one of two remaining in the state. Located at the intersection of Andrew Ave. and Seventh St, the 1938 Coca-Cola bottling plant building is opposite several historic buildings of similar mass and scale. The County Commission is considering plans to build the new courthouse parking garage on property immediately surrounding the building. The developer's proposal calls for an immense parking garage built in an L around the Coca Cola Bottling Plant. Although some of the garage's architectural features are designed to complement the plant, preservationists note that there are drastic issues with inappropriate massing, placement, and potential for damage due to increased traffic.

Orange City Historic District

The Wisconsin Company, a lumber company from Eau Claire Wisconsin, purchased land in 1874 in Southwest Volusia County which later became Orange City. Two members of that company - Dr. Seth French and Hugh H. DeYarman played an important role in the development of the city. Mr. DeYarman would eventually become the first mayor of Orange City and the hotel he established in 1875 – the DeYarman House Inn – is still standing. In 2004, the Orange City Historic District was added to the National Register of Historic Places. The district includes over 200 historic buildings and runs along the Florida Black Bear Trail – a national scenic byway. The Volusia County Historic Preservation Board has been working with local advocates to preserve many of the historic sites within the district. Some of the sites in the district have suffered neglect or hurricane damage and a potential rezoning along the 17/92 corridor in favor of redevelopment could adversely impact the historic district.

Milton Historic District

Milton is a small town in Florida's panhandle located on the banks of the Blackwater River and known for its role in Florida's lumber industry. The major threat to the district is the proposed widening of the main street through town from two lanes to a four lane capacity. The widening would call for the demolition of some of the district's oldest and most significant buildings, and would have a detrimental effect on the revitalization process currently underway. The Milton Historic District is continuing on the 2011 list from last year to encourage preservation advocates and transportation officials to collaborate on a solution that will protect the town's historic resources.

The Munroe House, Tallahassee

Built in 1904, the Munroe House was home to one of the founding families of Tallahassee. It is locally designated and a contributing building to the National Register Park Avenue Historic District. In the face of extreme financial hardship, the owner – LeMoyné Center for the Visual Arts - is now being forced to liquidate many of its assets. In the eyes of the property owner, the Munroe House, which sits on prime downtown real estate, would be more appealing to potential buyers if the year-long delay for a demolition permit is initiated now to pave the way for new construction. The loss of the Munroe House would not only mean the loss of a significant local and state historic site, but it would further erode the historic district. At this time, no demolition plans have been submitted to the Architectural Review Board. By raising awareness of the plight of Munroe House, the owner hopes find a potential buyer who might spare it from the wrecking ball.

Bellevue Biltmore Resort and Spa, Belleair

The Bellevue Hotel was built by Henry Plant in 1897 to boost tourism along Florida's west coast. The building is noted for its outstanding architectural features, with its unique multiple gables of different sizes, green sloped roof, exterior white siding, and extensive hand crafted woodwork. Visitors have included U.S. Presidents, British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, Duke of Windsor, Joe DiMaggio, Babe Ruth, Thomas Edison, Henry Ford and many Hollywood stars. During World War II, the hotel served as lodging for servicemen stationed at MacDill Air Force Base in Tampa. After that time, the hotel began to decline due to competition from newer, more modern motels. In 1991 Mido Development purchased the hotel and made many repairs. Between 1997 and 2004 a new owner attempted to restore common areas and guest rooms. The building was closed in 2009 following hurricane damage. Rehabilitation is certainly feasible as the economy is improving. The present owners purchased the property a year ago. They decline to either sell or rehabilitate the property, but have requested a demolition permit to enable construction of up to 180 condominiums.

William Camp House, Ocala

Enterprising businessman William Camp built this house in 1903 in what became Ocala's first historic district. Currently, the Camp house is threatened due to the lack of maintenance and is in danger of being demolished. The current owner of the property brought the Camp House before the Ocala Historic Preservation Advisory Board (OHPAB) on December 1, 2011 for an application to demolish the building. The Board decided to delay any action for a period of 90 days to gather more information on the condition of the building. OHPAB can deny demolition for a period up to 365 days after which time if the building has not been purchased, the current owner will be able to demolish the building.

Laura Street Trio, Jacksonville

Prominently sited on Laura and Forsyth Streets in downtown Jacksonville, the trio consists of the Old Florida National Bank Building, the Bisbee Building, and the Florida Life Building. The buildings have served as offices for various banks since 1925, at which time they were connected on the first floor level. The buildings have long been considered a single site since they are under the same ownership; they are integral to each other for development purposes; and they form a unique architectural grouping. The 10-story Bisbee Building, designed by the renowned architect Henry John Klutho, is Florida's first skyscraper and reflects the modernistic designs of the Prairie and Chicago schools of commercial architecture. The Florida Life Building, also designed by Klutho, is richly detailed with Prairie School architectural embellishments in polychromatic terra cotta and copper. Because of its narrow one bay width, the 11-story building has a strong vertical presence. The Old Florida National Bank Building, known as the "Marble Bank Building" for its Georgian marble façade is nestled squarely between the two skyscrapers and is considered the most significant example of the Neoclassical Revival Style in downtown Jacksonville. The threats are demolition by neglect, vandalism, and proposed demolition. The buildings have been vacant for more than two decades, with little maintenance performed to stabilize or preserve them. The threat is heightened as building pieces fall off or are removed and the buildings details deteriorate. A new mayor with a platform that includes downtown revitalization has an opportunity to reverse this longstanding decline.

Lewis Spring House, Tallahassee

This National Historic Landmark designed by internationally-renowned architect Frank Lloyd Wright in 1954 represents a rare example of his “hemicycle” or circular phase, the last and chronologically shortest phase of his career. It is the only remaining residence in Florida designed by Wright. The building sits in a gently sloping wooded setting on the outskirts of the developed suburban area of Tallahassee. Threats include nature and development pressure. Storms over the past few years have compromised the building envelope. Although the original owner remains committed to preserving this property for the benefit of the public, recent health issues could force a private sale to a non preservation minded buyer.

The Florida Trust for Historic Preservation is a non-profit organization of over 1600 members, and is the statewide partner to the National Trust for Historic Preservation. The Florida Trust was established in 1978 and since then has been the leader in the advocacy and education of preservationists around the state. Throughout the years, the Florida Trust has worked closely with the Florida Division of Historical Resources to keep abreast of the needs of the citizens of Florida for preservation programs and services.

The Annual Statewide Preservation Conference is held during the third full week in May and the location varies from year to year. The conference is an opportunity to showcase the host community’s historic preservation success stories with workshops, tours and events. The conference targets professional preservationists, preservation activists, design review commission members, architects, planners, historic homeowners and many others from the cultural and historical fields.

The mission of the Florida Trust for Historic Preservation is to promote the preservation of Florida’s unique cultural, historical and architectural resources.