

FLORIDA'S HISTORIC PRESERVATION TOOLKIT

A guide for protecting our state's historic places

PRESERVATION ADVOCACY



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Florida Trust for Historic Preservation

The Florida Trust for Historic Preservation is the statewide nonprofit dedicated to protecting Florida's extraordinary history and heritage, and sharing the inclusive and diverse stories of those who came before us. The Florida Trust is a 501(c)(3) charitable nonprofit organization, funded through public support and our members. Founded in 1978, the Florida Trust has collaborated to save irreplaceable Florida treasures like the Historic Florida Capitol and is a statewide partner of the National Trust for Historic Preservation.



National Trust for Historic Preservation

The National Trust for Historic Preservation is a private, non-profit organization dedicated to protecting significant places representing our diverse cultural experiences by taking direct action and inspiring broad public support. For decades, the National Trust has been committed to the goal of ensuring that the full American story is represented in the places we save. As the leading advocate for the protection of significant places and cultural landscapes, we help Americans protect and reuse irreplaceable historic resources; model best practices in stewardship and interpretation through our network of National Trust Historic Sites; and promote investment in historic urban neighborhoods and Main Streets to build stronger communities.

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PRESERVATION ADVOCACY

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Creating Youth Advocates

Advocating for historic preservation relies on engaging with people in ways that are meaningful to them. Listen, be respectful, share ideas and take action where you can. Through your preservation advocacy work you will build public awareness, grow relationships, increase understanding and demonstrate the value of historic preservation.

VALUE OF STORYTELLING: RELEVANCE, STAKEHOLDERS, INCLUSION

Because we believe preservation is about creating stronger, healthier communities, we don't just work to save a building and keep it under glass. We are working within a broader definition of preservation, which means sharing the stories of real people across time. In fact, many people when asked to define preservation say it is giving voice to the stories of those who came before us.

This broader definition requires we engage with everyone in a community— not just fellow preservationists. Storytelling is a way to make that connection.

Storytelling is a powerful tool that can be used to connect with people on a personal level. It can be used to share information, build relationships and inspire action. It can be one of the most powerful tools in making preservation relevant to people.

In the context of advocacy and community outreach, storytelling can be used to:

- Connect with broader audiences and build support for preservation efforts.
- Share the stories of historic places and the people who have lived there.
- Highlight the importance of preservation and its benefits to communities.
- Inspire people to take action to preserve their community's history.

Advocating for historic preservation relies on engaging with people in ways that are meaningful to them. Listen, be respectful, share ideas and take action where you can. Through your preservation advocacy work you will build public awareness, grow relationships, increase understanding and demonstrate the value of historic preservation.

Relevance

When planning how to tell your preservation story to best engage with stakeholders, consider why it is important. What should your listeners know and why should they care.

How you tell your story will likely change based on who you are talking to so you can be relevant to them. For instance, if you are asking lawmakers to fund a state grant program, you may want to focus on the economic benefits of preservation and how it can improve that lawmaker's district. These are talking points that are likely to resonate with that audience. However, if you are talking to board members of a historic house museum in a small town, you may want to focus on the benefit of those grants, the grant application process and how the Secretary of the Interior's Standards can be applied.

Stakeholders

Remember we are trying to connect a full community and tell a whole story. Consider how you can be inclusive in your storytelling.

Preservation requires full engagement with people of varying backgrounds - so be sure you are not creating barriers to engagement with your language. For instance, using technical terms when speaking to a non-technical audience will make it difficult for them to engage.

When you consider your stakeholders, remember that outreach to each should include several mediums from in-person events to online interactions.

Consider:

- Who do you, or should you, engage with to accomplish your work?
- How important is this audience to achieving your goal?
- If you communicate well with this group, what will happen?
- What communication tools do you need to make those effective communications happen?

Inclusion

Storytelling is a *powerful* way to promote human connection and empathy.

People can connect on a personal level when they hear someone's story, regardless of their backgrounds. Emphasizing people's stories from historic places also provides an opportunity to hear from people of different ethnicities, cultures, genders and abilities. This enables a broader group of people to be able to connect with those historic places. Storytelling can also build awareness, educate, challenge biases, promote conversations, and create a sense of belonging. Hearing diverse stories can also inspire others to think about preserving historic places in their communities.

Storytelling Strategy: When a Historic Place is Gone

How do you do historic preservation when the place is gone? Does that mean there is no longer a story to tell or a place to celebrate? Of course not! This is a perfect opportunity to use storytelling and think about historic preservation in a more holistic way.

There are different ways to remember places that are gone. They could be honored through historic markers and signage, through new physical elements in the landscape or through events that bring people together to share memories and information. With some creativity, there is no limit to how to bring memories of the past to the present.



The Smokey Hollow Commemoration at Cascades Park in Tallahassee uses structures to recreate what a typical home was like in the neighborhood. Smokey Hollow was a thriving African American community erased by urban renewal. Residents of Smokey Hollow helped design and develop the commemoration. Credit: Adrienne Burke

This interpretive signage at Prospect Bluff in Franklin County helps share the story of a site that is lost to history.
Credit: Sarah Miller



Historic reenacting is a storytelling technique that can be very effective in communicating about a historic site. Here James Bullock tells the story of free Black men who were members of the Spanish colonial militia at Fort Mose near St. Augustine.
Credit: Mark Krancer

*My ancestors —
how did they get
here, what was life
like for them and
what are we going
to do about it?*



Here are some examples of how storytelling can be used in advocacy and community engagement:

- Creating a video or podcast series that shares the stories of historic places in a community.
- Hosting a storytelling event where community members can share their own stories about historic places.
- Creating a walking tour that highlights the history of a community through storytelling.
- Developing a website or social media campaign that shares the stories of historic places.

A.L. Lewis descendant Peri Betsch leads a tour of American Beach history in Nassau County. Credit: Adrienne Burke



I like preserving the actual buildings, but for me it is the life stories. The shared experiences across time.



Ennis Davis leads a walking tour during Black History Month in Jacksonville's LaVilla neighborhood. Information during the tour was shared on social media. Credit: Adrienne Burke



Riverside Avondale Preservation in Jacksonville created the Centennial Heritage plaque program to celebrate buildings turning 100 years old. Property owners would have birthday parties for their homes and the campaign was shared on social media. Credit: Riverside Avondale Preservation

Storytelling is a versatile tool that can be used in a variety of ways to engage with communities and promote preservation.

The background of the page features a dark, textured surface with a prominent embossed floral or leafy design at the top. The design consists of several branches with leaves and small circular elements, possibly berries or buds, arranged in a symmetrical, branching pattern. The overall tone is dark and moody, with the embossed details catching some light.

Storytelling Spotlight: Making Your Own Historic Marker

There are **infinite** opportunities for preservation. To pursue these opportunities, we must explore what's outside of the boxes we've created. This isn't to say historic designations or walking tours don't have value, but it is to remind you that there are possibilities that have yet to be explored, histories that need to be preserved, partnerships to forge and stories that should be told.

Let's consider the ways we can tell stories utilizing signage. Historic markers have been used formally since the 1800s in America as a way to tell stories of places deemed important. In the early- and mid-1900s, many states launched formal historic marker programs; these are the markers that you have probably seen outside a historic site or maybe alongside a road where a significant event occurred. While these signs have provided insights into the past for many people, they come with a sizable price tag and are not the only option.

Looking to Rochester, New York for inspiration, Hinda Mandell and Shawn Dunwoody chose to create something from nothing. The site of Anna and Frederick Douglass' first home is a parking lot. In an effort to tell the story of both Anna and Frederick Douglass, the duo began to coordinate interpretive interventions in 2017. They used a variety of arts, crafts and community engagement strategies to install temporary storytelling installations. This resulted in a temporary handmade knit historic marker.

These installations developed community interest in commemorating this story, which led to relationship building, funding opportunities, and an understanding of the past. In 2018, a permanent state historic marker was installed, replacing the knit one. In 2020, a three-dimensional art piece was installed at the site to visually communicate the history in a dynamic way.



Temporary art/marker installation at the Douglass home site.
Credit: Caitlin Meives

We must make an intentional choice to create and seize opportunities to preserve our community's past. Sometimes that opportunity is creating something temporary with the hope that the history connects with someone and makes an impression.

Is there a place in your community that you think has a story that should be told? Seize the opportunity and make your own “sign!” What places are important to you in your neighborhood or larger community? Whether the place has history that is over 100 years old or its importance is tied to something that happened more recently, create your own “historic marker.”

Step 1:

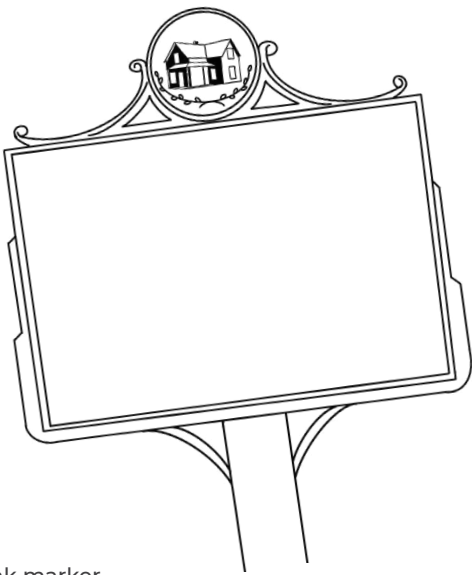
Pick a place that is important to you for any reason and then assess where you would want to put your marker.

Is there an electrical pole? If it is a business with windows, you can inquire if they would put up your “historic marker” (for some period of time). Is it a place where you or someone you know lives? Consider putting the marker on your door, in a window, on a fence, or someplace else that you feel comfortable with people. If the building is boarded up, you can consider utilizing the plywood as a foundation for your marker. Make sure you get permission for the location if it is not your property or it is in a public location like a park or street right-of-way.

Step 2:

Now that you have chosen a site and you have identified a place or two that would work for a historic marker, you need to think about how you physically want to create a marker.

If you want to put a marker on the sidewalk, consider using chalk or Rainwalk spray (rain makes the art visible). Would you like to utilize a fence? You could consider hanging a textile piece (crochet, knit, fabric). Textiles also wrap well around electrical poles. If you are utilizing a window, you could use tissue paper to create a stained glass effect, hang a poster, or something else entirely. Be mindful of the climate in your area. If you



Using a blank marker template is a foundation for people to start creating their own markers. Credit: Sarah Marsom

live somewhere that experiences a lot of rain, you may want to think through ways that can make your historic marker water resistant.

Step 3:

Understanding the materials you are working with will help guide your creative process to design your version of a historic marker.

Your marker can tell the story any way you want to. You can utilize text or imagery to tell a story literally; you can create an abstract piece based on how the place makes you feel; or you can create something that makes a statement. Thoughtfully sketch out a design that will allow you to creatively express yourself within the design restrictions (material, scale, installation technique). If you are using text, be mindful of the story you are telling. You want someone to read the marker and walk away feeling a new connection to the place regardless of age or demographics.

Step 4:

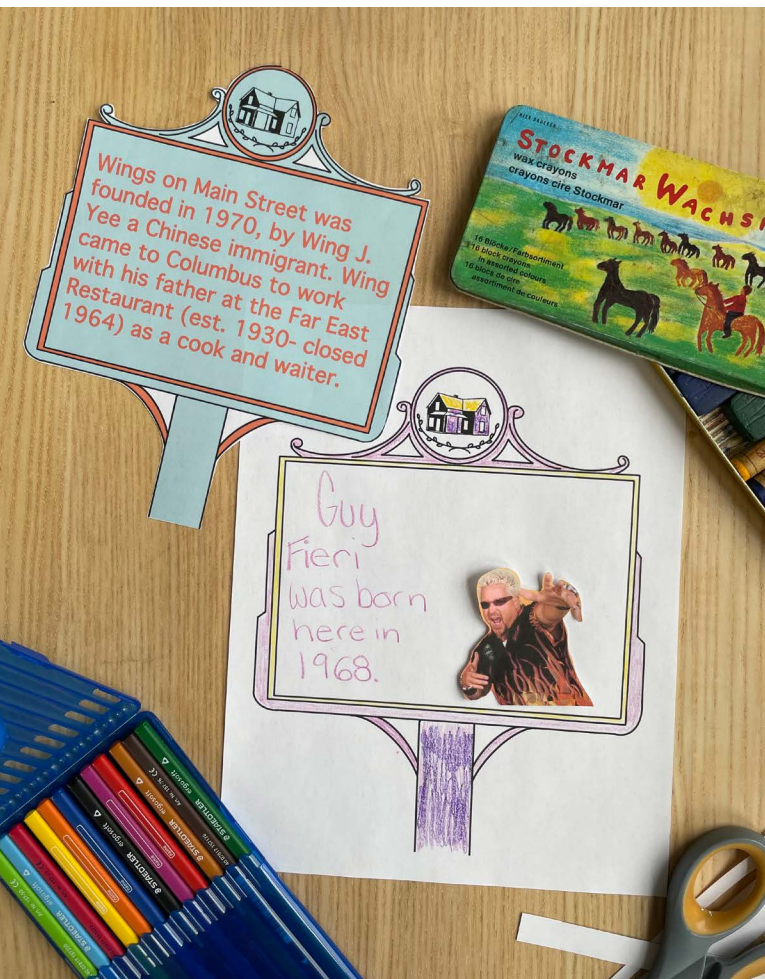
Have fun creating your piece!

Using your chosen medium, create your marker! Don't get frustrated if your creation deviates from the design; let your materials inspire you as you work to tell the story. Your voice is valuable, and you should feel empowered to tell the story in whatever way you think is best.

Step 5:

Install your historic marker!

Make sure to take pictures and document this accomplishment. You have shown the world a new perspective as to why this place is important. Please consider your historic marker as a way to create impermanent art and to be respectful of public/private property. You never know, your historic marker may lead to something permanent. If your storytelling would require a clean up after a rainstorm, make sure to go pick up the pieces to minimize littering.



Making your own historic marker can be as creative as you'd like or address things you find important about your community. Credit: Sarah Marsom

TACTICAL PRESERVATION: CONNECTING WITH ELECTED OFFICIALS

Community outreach and public engagement are activities that connect people in your community around historic preservation activities. An important part of this work is connecting with elected officials.

Most preservation is local, and these elected officials are vital in making decisions that will directly impact how (and if) preservation happens in your community. It is always a good idea to work with elected officials to make sure they understand the impact of preservation on your community: philosophically, aesthetically, culturally and economically. You want to build relationships before there is an issue.

Elected officials have a platform to share what they believe is valuable. If you can find ways to connect them to preservation, they will include that in their language as well. Finally, local elected officials bridge the gap between communities and state and federal government. It is wonderful to have a city council member or mayor reach out to their counterpart in DC or Tallahassee on important preservation issues.

Whether you are engaging with local elected officials or state or federal lawmakers, you want to consider a strategic plan complete with goals. What do you hope to accomplish? Perhaps it is just building awareness on the value of preservation in your community, or maybe it is asking federal lawmakers to support the Historic Preservation Fund. No matter what you are advocating for, it is important to understand going in what your goal is. This helps drive your tactics, key messages and communication platforms.

As you go through the advocacy process it is important to have a clear, concise ask — and that all your messaging is clear and relatable. No jargon! It's also important to stay informed so that your conversations are relevant.

Florida Trust CEO Melissa Wyllie and Board of Trustees member Corion DeLaine in Washington D.C. advocating alongside the National Trust for Historic Preservation. Credit: Florida Trust



Some items to consider while building your advocacy plan:

- **Branding / reputation management** - Make sure you are representing the organization or issue in your conversations. Remember historic preservation is nonpartisan, and don't use meetings with lawmakers as an opportunity to share personal political beliefs. If you are speaking on behalf of an organization, be sure that your communication is on brand, utilizing visual brand components and the language and tone of your organization.
- **Office visits** - Office visits both locally and at the federal and state level are a good tactic to reach lawmakers with your ask.
- **One pagers, leave behinds, economic impact, FAQs** - Consider what you want to leave behind with lawmakers after your office visit. A good idea is to have a folder with a brief overview of your organization, your issue, and how you would like them to act.
- **Collaborative coalition building** - We are louder when we speak together. Be sure you are connected with other organizations that are working toward the same goal.
- **Utilize media** - Media outlets can effectively share the message. Consider brief, factual media alerts, press events and press releases. These should also be clear, concise and include what you are hoping to achieve.
- **Social media** - Social media can be a good way to connect with different audiences and build support for your advocacy work.
- **Appearing, testifying at committee hearings** - This can be a useful tool if you are advocating for an issue that will be heard and voted on by a legislative body at the state or federal level.
- **Grassroots advocacy platforms** - Online advocacy tools like Change.org can be a good tool to use if you want to share a petition, or provide an easy way for people to contact their individual lawmakers.

Florida Trust CEO Melissa Wyllie testifies before the Commerce and Tourism Committee in support of SB 288. Credit: Florida Trust for Historic Preservation

PRO TIP

Know Advocacy Limits

Depending on where you work or serve, there may be limitations around how you can communicate with elected officials. For instance, if you serve on your city's Historic Preservation Commission, it wouldn't be appropriate for you to directly advocate for preservation actions at your city council. This is when it is important to collaborate. Local nonprofit groups can help advocate where historical commissions cannot, and state and federal preservation organizations can do the same.





Florida legislative representatives and the Secretary of State were invited to tour a historic restoration project in Jacksonville to see the value of preservation projects firsthand. This was part of efforts to advocate for a state historic preservation tax credit. Credit: Florida Trust for Historic Preservation



The Florida Trust speaking in front of the Florida House of Representatives on behalf of historic preservation.

ADVOCATING AT LOCAL GOVERNMENT MEETINGS

Being a part of the local government process is very important in preservation advocacy. This might include attending meetings of your local historic preservation or planning board or city or county commission.

Know the Process:

Understand the procedures and rules of the meetings. Each local government may have specific guidelines for public participation, speaking time limits, and the process for raising concerns.

Research and Prepare:

Thoroughly research the issue you want to address. Gather facts, statistics, and any relevant data that support your position. Be prepared to present your case in a clear and organized manner.

Build a Coalition:

Collaborate with like-minded individuals or organizations. A unified voice can have a stronger impact. Coordinate efforts to ensure that multiple perspectives are represented.

Contact Board Members in Advance:

Reach out to board members or key decision-makers before the meeting to discuss your concerns. This can help build relationships and provide an opportunity to share your perspective before the official meeting.

PRO TIP

Be a Squeaky Wheel

While being respectful and mindful of staff and elected officials' time, don't be afraid to be a squeaky wheel. There are many competing interests in local government. It is easy for issues to get lost in the shuffle. So it is okay to follow up if you don't hear anything back from staff or elected officials. Check in if it has been awhile since they have heard from you. Often the issues that get elevated in a local government are the ones that get the most attention or that elected officials hear about the most.



Members of the Miami-Dade County Historic Preservation Board.
Credit: Miami-Dade County

Craft a Clear Message:

Clearly articulate your message. Be concise and focus on the key points you want to convey. Use simple language that everyone can understand and avoid jargon.

Utilize Visuals:

If applicable, use visuals such as charts, graphs or photos to support your arguments. Visual aids can help make complex information more accessible and memorable.

Be Respectful:

Maintain a respectful and professional demeanor. Even if you disagree with others, express your opinions in a courteous manner. Avoid personal attacks or confrontational behavior.

Timing is Key:

Be mindful of the timing of your comments. If possible, try to speak early in the meeting when commissioners are likely to be more attentive.

Engage the Audience:

Encourage community members to attend the meeting in support of your cause. A visible and vocal presence can demonstrate widespread community concern.

Follow Up:

After the meeting, follow up with board members or commissioners to express gratitude for their time and reiterate your key points. This helps to maintain an open line of communication.

Stay Informed:

Stay informed about the progress of the issue after the meeting. Continue to engage with board members, commissioners and other stakeholders to ensure that your concerns are taken into consideration.

PRO TIP

Historic Preservation Month Resolutions

Historic Preservation Month is in **May** every year. Asking your local government to do a resolution during the month of May to celebrate historic preservation can be an easy way to draw attention to preservation in your community. There are templates for these resolutions online, and/or you can also contact your local government planning department or clerk's office to help create a document.

Commission and Council calendars are scheduled in advance, so it would be a good idea to contact your local government as early as February or March to get something completed.

COMMUNITY OUTREACH AND ENGAGEMENT BEST PRACTICES

Community outreach and engagement are critical to the success of historic preservation efforts. Making sure people are engaged ensures that the process is inclusive, sustainable and reflective of the community's values and goals. Outreach to a wider audience can help foster a sense of identity, pride and shared responsibility for a community's historic places.

Outreach activities provide opportunities to educate community members about the historic significance of certain places or areas. This increased awareness helps create a sense of appreciation for the community's history that creates a connection between past and present. When residents actively participate in preserving their heritage, they are more likely to take pride in their community, its history and identity.

Efforts to protect and celebrate shared heritage can strengthen community bonds and relationships among residents. Involving diverse community voices in decision-making processes ensures that preservation efforts consider a broad range of perspectives about what places are important.

Community engagement in historic preservation can also provide an opportunity for different generations to work together. Older generations can share stories and experiences with younger community members which can lead to a sense of continuity over time and connection.

Communication Best Practices

- **Simplify terms** - Sometimes the terminology used by preservationists is complicated and technical. Be sure to avoid jargon and acronyms.
- **Remove barriers to engagement** – Think through what that means for your community. For example, an architectural style guide as part of design guidelines within a historic district are a good example of clearly communicating to a variety of stakeholder groups - not just speaking a language that makes sense to architects.
- **Connect with different stakeholders.** Don't just talk to yourself!
- **Be sure that messaging is clear, consistent and digestible.**

Communicating with the Media

Media professionals are very busy. If you are hoping to engage them in your community engagement or advocacy campaign it is important to communicate with them effectively. A few tips:

- **Be proactive** - Identify outlets and reporters in your community that cover preservation-related issues - or should. Learn about them and what they cover. Work to build relationships and establish yourself or your organization as a resource. Demonstrate not just that they can help you, but that you can also help them.
- **Build a media list** - This may change based on the campaign you are working on. A story about saving a historic school might be sent to a different group of reporters than a story about taking away a local tax credit. Identify outlet, reporter, email and phone numbers.
- **Event related media** - If you want media to attend your event, send a brief media alert. The alert can be a paragraph or two generally about the event, followed by the specific details (who, what, where, when). If there is going to be something exceptionally photo-worthy, address that at the end of the alert (photo avail with mayor and Main Street staff available after the event). Close with specific event details like parking, and how to RSVP. All media alerts and press releases should end with a boilerplate, a canned overview of what the organization does.
- **TV News** - It is a good idea to identify specific reporters at newsrooms to pitch a story, but also send the information to the general news tips email or contact form. Editorial meetings where the outlet decides what will be covered that day are generally in the morning. It is a good idea to follow up with a phone call in the morning to see if your story is on the schedule.
- **Press releases** - Be sure to use standard press release style, including direct quotes, if you are sharing specific information. It is always good to also share a photo with releases.
- **Speaking on the record** - If a reporter requests to speak to you, take a moment and research who they are and who they work for. Ask for their deadline. Take some time to consider how to respond, and talk to others on your team if necessary. When you are being interviewed be sure to spell your name (especially for television news) and clearly state who you are representing. Try to speak in brief sound bites and don't repeat the question in your answer. If you don't know the answer don't take a guess! Say you will get back to the reporter with those details. Remember you may be representing an organization— not your personal opinions — in these interviews.

The Florida Trust partnered with the Florida Public Archaeology Network in Fort Myers to host “Over My Dead Body: Preserving Historic Cemeteries in Fort Myers”. Credit: Melissa Wyllie



Above: Jenny Wolfe and Laura Houston do survey work at the historic Ezra Gerry Museum and Research Center in Pensacola. Credit: Florida Trust



Left: Reaching different audiences is important in community outreach. Here Florida Trust Board member Joseph Yates stands with a docent from the Lawndale Museum on River Road, Florida Trust CEO Melissa Wyllie, U.S. Congressman Bill Posey and Yasmin Kahn-Hohensee. Credit: Florida Trust

PRO TIP

Check out the Messaging Guide for Local Preservation Programs

The National Alliance of Preservation Commissions has an excellent resource for helping communicate about historic preservation to a variety of audiences. You can check out this resource for free at www.napcommissions.org/messaging-guide.

CREATING YOUTH ADVOCATES

Fostering an appreciation for the past can start at an early age. Here are some of our favorite ways to help develop the next generation of historic preservationists:

Activities:

- 1. Explain Traditions/Celebrations:** Whether it is cooking your grandma's recipe for chess pie or telling the story behind Juneteenth, it is important to share the history for your small traditions or larger annual celebrations.
- 2. Create Junior Rangers:** Did you know that the National Park Service has free activity books for youth to become Junior Rangers? These activity books help teach kids about specific sites of historic, cultural, and natural significance. You can find these activities at the physical parks, but you can also find them online for you to download. They even have an activity book that will allow your kid to become a Historic Preservation Junior Ranger! This activity book talks about the concept of historic preservation broadly, the tools it has created to protect communities, and it provides a history of the preservation movement that is accessible to all ages. www.nps.gov/articles/hispresjuniorrranger.htm
- 3. Historic Markers:** Make a historic marker as a family activity! Have a discussion about places that matter to your family. Maybe it is the playground or the zoo. Maybe it is a place where your family's story is tied to. Encourage your kid to consider what counts as significant and allow them to create a historic marker for that place, while you create one of your own. This is a wonderful way to empower your kid to creatively express a story about something that matters to them.



It's not too early to engage young people in helping with preservation efforts. Florida Trust CEO Melissa Wylie engaged her daughter to help out with building assessments in Port Charlotte after Hurricane Ian. Credit: Melissa Wylie

- 4. Explore:** Turn your kid into an observer by going for neighborhood walks; these walks can help both of you become architectural detectives by looking for clues that tell you the age of a building. Are the bricks wavy on the edges? They might have been handmade! Are there seashells in the concrete? That is tabby! You could also visit a historic cemetery and work together to find the oldest headstone. If your kid loves art, set up a couple of lawn chairs on the sidewalk in a historic district and try plein air painting/ sketching in nature - see who can best capture the essence of the old homes. If the weather is too hot, go for a visit to your local historical society or history museum and enjoy learning about the past in air conditioning. You could also visit your local library and spend some time researching your old house together - digging through old directories and maps. Take a ride on a historic train. There are many ways to be a preservation explorer! Make sure to keep your eyes out for special events that might appeal to your kid's interests.

- 5. Help Your Community:** One of the things that makes preservation amazing is the way it allows us to support our community. Make an impact alongside your kid. Spend an hour picking weeds or cleaning headstones at a historic cemetery. Pick up litter when taking a walk around a historic district. Reach out to your local historical society and see if they need any help with special events. Find a way to support your community in a way that uplifts your spirits, while preserving the past.

- 6. Find Partners:** Work with community organizations that already work with youth. Do they have a summer camp or afterschool program? There may be a way to work in a project on historic preservation into their activities. You can also contact your local school system to find out how preservation activities may fit into their curriculum.



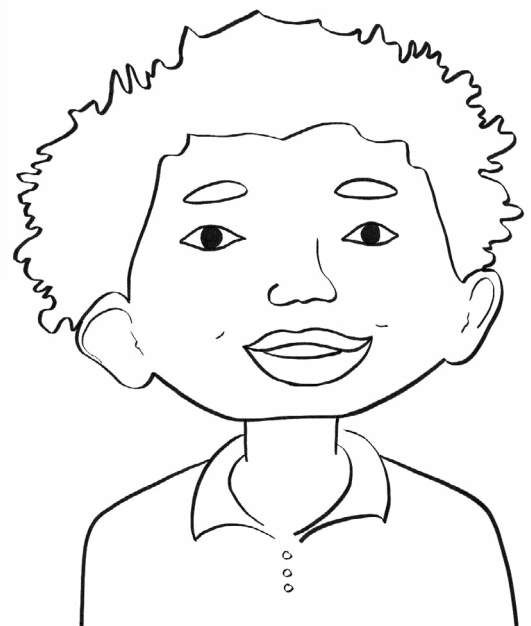


Emily Jane Murray, Public archaeologist with the Florida Public Archaeology Network's Northeast Regional Center, teaches students about maritime archaeology using their Maple Leaf shipwreck-on-a-tarp activity at the Bronson Mulholland House in Palatka, FL. Credit: Florida Public Archaeology Network



THE FLORIDA TRUST HOUSE IN TALLAHASSEE, FLORIDA
FLORIDATRUST.ORG

The Hays-Hood house, also known as the Florida Trust House, as a coloring page for kids. This page is provided at Florida Trust events. Credit: Florida Trust for Historic Preservation.





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