

To the Board of the North Port City Commission,

The City of North Port Historic and Cultural Advisory Board applauds the concern and good stewardship shown in the formation of our advisory board and past preservation efforts made by the commission regarding the 1959 Jack West Sarasota School of Architecture facilities and Cyclorama at Warm Mineral Springs. The historic public art, Architecture, and tree canopy that compose a cityscape and how those things are cared for convey a lot about the past and current culture of most cities to residents and visitors. For instance; if a community just left its public art or historic structures to rot away with no care, and an adjacent community embraced its cultural heritage with care, and even had museums to display it with pride; which of the two will be more desirable to visitors and residents?

Thank you for working to preserve and improve North Port's sense of place. The cityscape may be what is most noticeable to visitors and what may be considered a large part of the face of North Port; however this letter is looking to inform the commission on the specific needs of the city concerning our shared historical and cultural resources. As you are aware; our city has an established historic preservation policy in our local governance document; Chapter 58 of the City of North Port Unified Land Development Code and written in compliance with the National Preservation Act of 1966 which:

- Established preservation policy at the national level
- Created the National Registry of Historic Places
- Established basic criteria for evaluation-elaborated by National Park Service regulations
- Created Historic Preservation Fund with grants available to Local Certified Governments
- Detailed process for review of federally funded, permitted, or administered projects and their potential impact on listed or eligible historic resources
- Created State Historic Preservation Offices; Florida SHPO: Division of Historical Resources

Oral Histories Program

Perhaps the easiest request that the Historic and Cultural Advisory Board is looking for permission from the City Commission to proceed on; is an oral histories program. An oral history tells an individual's experience and perspective of events in our city and in their lives. They capture moments in time and perspective of the people who lived them. They tell us about an individual's view of the events that shaped our landscape and the cultural exchange that make us who we are today. They also offer a snapshot of the "current" time in which they are made, and are often used in documentaries because of this perspective.

Each individual oral history is a way to capture a personal perspective of life in our city as lived by an individual in their own words and voice. Written word cannot convey intonation, cadence, or pitch variations that we use in everyday speech to convey extra facets and meanings of words. These individual inflections can be recorded in an oral history using a voice recorder. Video oral histories add to this; the ability to convey facial and body gestures, as well as giving us a visual memory of the individual and their "current" surroundings.

Historical and Cultural Archive

Oral histories are documents that are mostly used by biographers, historians, and scholars; they contain information not available in any other format. But like any other document; they can be lost without a repository to collect and preserve them for posterity. One recent example of lost history is the oral histories gathered by the city's 50th anniversary committee. Some of these irreplaceable documents were records of the people who lived in and influenced the cityscape during the founding of our city, and have since passed. Currently given the age of our city; we have a unique opportunity to capture oral histories from the individuals who were here during the first decades, but the opportunity to capture an individual's oral history is always limited by time.

A City of North Port Historical Archive needs to be available for collecting and retaining oral histories along with historical documents and important cultural artifacts. Historians, students, and other researchers need to be able to have access these records contain the shared cultural heritage and identity of the City of North Port.

A City of North Port historical archive containing information about our city's vast number of archaeological sites and the cultural remains of the peoples that have been drawn to the landscape for our unique fresh water resources for at least 14,000 years was a fore-drawn conclusion in our governance documents by the founders of our city, but was never established:

Unified Land Development Code Sec. 58-6. - Professional qualification and survey requirements.

The research design for a site assessment survey shall be reviewed and approved by the City Manager or designee before the survey commences. Who is qualified to assess a cultural survey plan in the city? Who does the compliance and review? The survey shall be designed to locate all historic resources and assess their significance. At a minimum, site assessment surveys must contain sections on the following:

(1)Project scope.

*(2)Archival research. **How and where?***

(3)Research design.

(4)Fieldwork.

(5)Analysis.

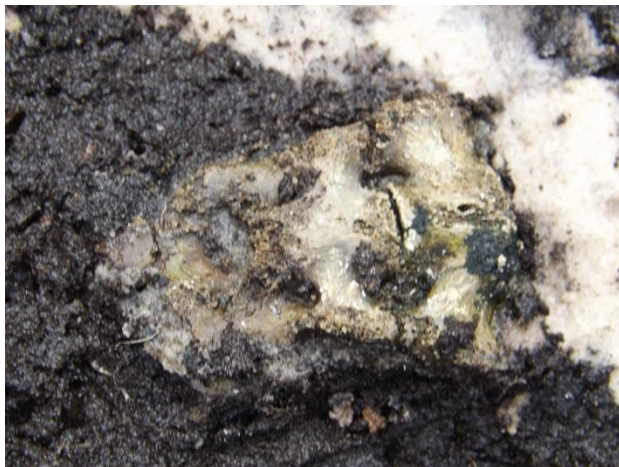
(6)Conclusions.

(7)Florida Master Site File forms for all resources identified shall also be included. [Amended 9-23-2002 by Ord. No. 2002-42]

Historical and Cultural Resources Survey

In the fourteen millennia that humanity has lived, loved, and buried their loved ones in our cityscape many ancient cemeteries have been establish. The people who lived in our cityscape during the archaic periods would wrap their dead in burial shrouds and move the peat aside in sacred slough-ways that

connected the water sources. Then carefully staking their loved ones remains into the earth under the water saturated peat through the burial shrouds; they would cover them up by replacing the peat they had moved aside for the underwater burial. Some of these unmarked cemeteries contain hundreds of such burials; one cemetery site was estimated to contain upwards of a thousand intentional burials by archaeologists. The lack of an historical resources archive and/or citywide historical/cultural resources survey has led to many of these cemeteries being impacted by development. Surveys for the boundaries of known cemeteries along with probability mapping and LIDAR imaging would help to assure that these sacred sites that give our city a sense of place are protected. Below are some examples where we have impacted these cultural resources and sacred cemeteries over the past few decades of growth:



Top: A 2015 canal dredging project impacted a number of Archaic Period human burials within the known cemetery slough that is a component of the larger Nona Spring (Coco Plumb Sink) Archaeological Complex including habitation zones, the cemetery slough, and the spring. Bottom left: A baby's sacrum found in the scatter of human remains in which a young woman's sacrum (bottom right) was found nearby.

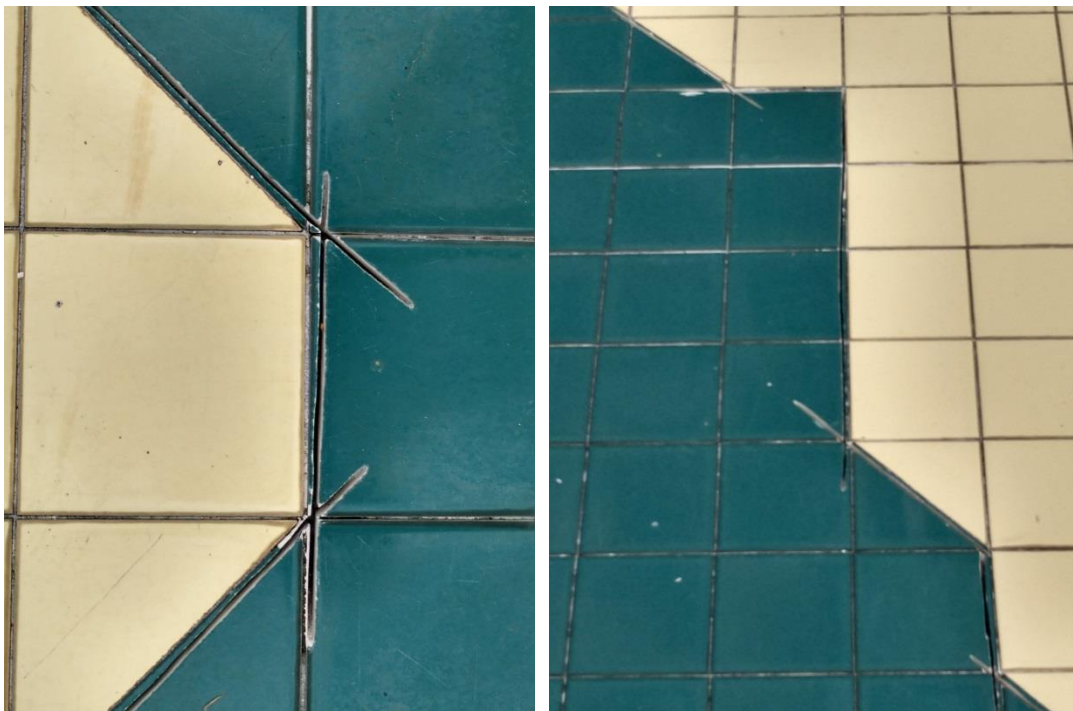


Little Salt Spring slough-way today (top) and 1948 (bottom); red circle indicates home sites in cemetery. The blue line is the water retention pond built for the police training facility in 1998. A dozen years later in 1986 an archaeological report contracted by General Development Corporation (that was filed with the city) indicated a mound present in what is now the pond. That is an archaeological resource connected to the Little Salt Spring Archaeological Complex containing information about some of the first people who live here that is forever lost. This report is the reason the city decided not to complete Acadia Terrace; a platted road adjacent to the slough.

Our historic structures, way markers and monuments have not been spared by this lack of compliance and review:



Above: An historic feature along Myakkahatchee Creek thought to be related to the turpentine industry and that same feature (below) after city clearing in 2018. No historic, cultural, or ecological surveys were performed in planning for the close to two linear mile project along the creek.



The 1960 Quadricentennial Warm Mineral Springs Monument was defaced last month as part of the process to reface it in new tile. This was done without direction of the commission or consultation from the Historic and Cultural Advisory Board. The artisan hired by staff cut all of these original tiles with an angle grinder before a tile size match had even been found. As of last check; replacement tiles of the exact size have not been located.



An iconic way marker to the historic Warm Mineral Springs Gateway; the Warm Mineral Springs Arrow Sign was destroyed without any surveys required by the city when the land owner asked for permission, or offer to retain the original metal skin. It was chunked up by heavy equipment and thrown away like so much trash in 2016.

Above are just a few examples of how we have impacted our shared cultural heritage over the last few decades. We can do better, but need to give future staff and commissions the tools they need to make better informed decisions about the preservation of our past, and the ability of the land to teach us about where we have come from and give us direction to where we are going. Giving our city its sense of place and a cultural heritage that is unique to our cityscape; a history spanning 14,000 years!

Historical Marker Program

A city that is proud of its history likes to educate its public and visitors about what makes it unique. A well placed Historical marker is a great way to get that information out and monumentalize an event, person, or feature that has impacted the history of our city. The North Port City Commission has expressed some enthusiasm when discussing historical markers in the past and the Historic and Cultural Advisory Board would like some direction on a potential City of North Port historical marker program. North Port is currently home to 3 full sized historical markers. The marker located near the entrance to Little Salt Spring is set in a large rock making it one of the most unique historical markers in Sarasota County. New full sized historical markers with the pole cost about \$2400.00 each currently.



Above: Little Salt Springs Marker dedicated by the Chief Chi-ee Chapter of the Daughters of the American Colonists in 1979.

Below: Blue Star Memorial Highway dedicated by the Allamanda Garden Club December 3rd 1968





The marker located near the entrance at Warm Mineral Springs has a different theme on each side and is one of Sarasota County's most widely read historical markers with the daily foot traffic.





Sometimes historical markers offer unexpected public awareness opportunities. Our newly refurbished Warm mineral Springs Historical Marker at the New College Public Archaeology Laboratory's Archaeology Fest.

Public Exhibit Space

The Historic and Cultural Advisory Board would also like access to exhibit space at Warm Mineral Springs and perhaps City Hall or other public facilities, as well as on the city website under an historical resources tab. The information in whatever public interpretive panels, dioramas, and exhibits need to be legitimized by the board as misinformation in public awareness historical displays are worse than no information at all. All considerations would be pending available space and budget.

Staff coordinating with the Historical and Cultural Advisory Board for recommendations concerning changes to publicly owned historical/cultural features within the municipality

Our board again applauds this commission's continuing work to preserve our past for posterity and would like to also be conferred with by staff for our expert advice concerning our shared historical and cultural resources on any future city projects.

Best Regards,

Bill Goetz, Vice Chair
Historic and Cultural Advisory Board