

**REPORT OF THE PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT  
APPLICATION FOR DESIGNATION  
AS A CITY OF JACKSONVILLE LANDMARK**

**LM-13-08  
801 – 805 West Forsyth Street**

*GENERAL LOCATION: Northwest corner of West Forsyth Street and North Madison Street in the LaVilla section of Downtown Jacksonville*

Prepared in accordance with the JACKSONVILLE ORDINANCE CODE, SECTION 307.104, the Jacksonville Planning and Development Department hereby forwards to the Jacksonville Historic Preservation Commission, its "Findings, Conclusions and Recommendations" on the Landmark Designation, LM-13-08, sponsored by the property owner, Jacksonville Historic Properties, Inc. (Petra Management, Inc.).

**FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS**

- (A) At the request of the Jacksonville Historic Preservation Commission, the Jacksonville Planning and Development Department began preparing a designation application for the property located at 801- 805 West Forsyth Street.
- (B) Consistent with the JACKSONVILLE ORDINANCE CODE, SECTION 307.104(d), the Planning and Development Department determined that the application for designation of the property at 801 – 805 West Forsyth Street as a Landmark was complete. As required, the Planning and Development Department had signs posted in front of the property being considered for designation, as well as sent notices by U.S. Mail to each owner of real property within three hundred and fifty (350) feet of the proposed site. Notice of the public hearing on the designation of 801 – 805 West Forsyth Street as a Landmark was published in the *Financial News and Daily Record*. Proof of publication will be attached to this report.
- (C) If designated, any activity affecting the exterior of the property at 801 – 805 West Forsyth Street will require a Certificate of Appropriateness (COA) from the Jacksonville Historic Preservation Commission. Before issuing the Certificate of Appropriateness, the Commission will review the proposed activity for consistency with the *Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation and Guidelines for Rehabilitating Historic Buildings*. Routine repairs and maintenance, alterations, and new construction not seen from the public right-of-way and other projects consistent with the Secretary's Standards can be pre-approved by the Jacksonville Planning and Development Department. However, the following activities will require a review by the Jacksonville Historic



Preservation Commission.

1. Additions to historic buildings or structures.
2. Window replacement or major changes to or addition of door and window openings.
3. Demolition of all or part of historic buildings.
4. New construction and additions.
5. Enclosure of porch, porte-cochere, or garage.
6. Porch replacement.
7. Relocation of historic buildings.
8. Roof replacement with material different from existing or change in roof form.
9. Storefront restoration or replacement.
10. Mothballing
11. Other work that the Planning and Development Department has determined to be in conflict or potentially in conflict with the *Secretary of the Interior's Standards*.

(D) At the close of the public hearing, the Jacksonville Historic Preservation Commission shall determine, whether based upon the evidence, the application for 801 – 805 West Forsyth Street meets the criteria for designation. In reviewing the application, the Planning and Development Department has found the application to meet two of the seven criteria. The two criteria include the following;

*A. Its value as a significant reminder of the cultural, historical, architectural, or archaeological heritage of the City, state, or nation.*

Jacksonville and Duval County have a long association with the development of railroads in Florida that continues today to define the community as a major rail center while significantly contributing to the local economy. Because of its strategic location immediately west of downtown, LaVilla has played a pivotal role in Jacksonville's railroad history that started before the Civil War with the opening of the Florida, Atlantic, & Gulf Railroad in March of 1860. The physical character of that part of LaVilla south of West Monroe Street began to change rapidly after the war with the extension of new rail lines into the city and expansion of existing ones. The area became crowded with rail yards, warehouses, wholesale and retail businesses along with small hotels, boarding houses, restaurants, and saloons. This warehouse, industrial, and transit character continued well into the twentieth century, however, most of the representative

historic building stock of this period has been removed by the end of the century. With the shifting of railroad activity from the area including the closing of the Jacksonville Terminal, most of these buildings became underutilized or vacant and eventually being removed due to deterioration or for redevelopment purposes. The two buildings that constitute the property at 801 – 805 West Forsyth Street are part of a very small number of historic commercial or light-industrial structures that remain in the southern part of LaVilla.

Although the date of construction has not been definitively determined, these buildings appear to date from the turn of the twentieth century or before since the area was spared by the Great Fire of 1901. Determining a definitive date of construction for either building is difficult due to no available building permit records for the years between 1901 and 1904, as well as the fact that the city directories did not consistently list businesses or residents by street number and name for much of LaVilla until around 1912. The two-story brick building at the northwest corner of West Forsyth Street and North Madison Street may have been constructed during the 1890s based upon the 1897 and 1903 Sanborn Maps. A building of the same size and shape was recorded on the 1897, 1903, and 1913 maps, as well as the 1969 map. The first city directory listing for the building was in 1901 and listed it being occupied by the James & Stevens Grocery Store. Both Grovan James and George Stevens were identified as being African-American. However from 1903 to 1913, the building was occupied by George Stevens who continued to operate a merchandise store while residing on the second story. By 1906 and continuing to 1912, George Stevens operated a saloon on the first story of the building while continuing to reside on the second. In 1908 his business was listed as Carn & Stevens, "Dealers in Fine Wines, Liquors, Cigars and Tobacco".<sup>1</sup>

Based on comparisons of the 1897 and 1903 Sanborn Maps, the one-story building may have been constructed between 1897 and 1903. On the 1903 map, the site was occupied by a one-story brick building that housed twelve tenements. Other than recessed rear entryways, the 1903 building mimics the basic design of the current building as also reflected on the 1913 Sanborn Map. The tenements were represented in the 1905 city directory which listed eight African American women, all employed as domestic or laundress, residing in the address range of 801 to 825 West Forsyth Street.<sup>2</sup> By 1913, the building had been converted to its general appearance as seen from West Forsyth Street. Internally, the building was broken into four distinct sections. The two large sections that were internally connected were used for carriage repairs and repainting with one of the two smaller sections being vacant, and the other one housing a harness shop. The 1913 city directory identified the building as being occupied by the Green Brothers, Carriage Makers.<sup>3</sup> In 1913, a continuous awning over the sidewalk ran across the front of both buildings before turning the corner at 801 West Forsyth to parallel a section of North Madison Street.

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1 *Jacksonville City Directories, 1900 – 1913.*

Hasker Carn was the other partner

2 The 1913 Sanborn Map listed the address range for the building as 801 to 825 West Forsyth Street. Currently it has the address of 801 - 805 West Forsyth Street.

3 City Directory 1913 & 1913 Sanborn Map

The owners were Edward L. Green and Webster Green.

During 1915 & 1916, the one-story building housed the Jacksonville Chero-Cola Bottling Company operated by Edward Bates, president, Thomas Salisbury, vice-president, and H.E. Black, secretary & treasurer. Founded nationally in 1912, the Chero-Cola brand, which included Nehi and Melo, was extremely popular and for a while challenged the dominance of Coca Cola in the soft drink business. The company eventually had 700 franchises across the country. Due to a successful legal challenge from the Coca Cola Company, the company had to drop the use of the word, cola, in its name. The business began to decline until it introduced a new cola called Royal Crown or RC which became the new name for the company.<sup>4</sup> After 1915 and into the 1920s, the building housed automobile repair shops, a bed spring company, moving and transfer businesses, and even a restaurant.<sup>5</sup>

*G. Its suitability for preservation or restoration.*

In utilizing this criterion, it has been the practice of the Planning and Development Department to evaluate proposed landmarks based on evidence of significant exterior alterations that have negatively impacted character-defining features, as well as represent alterations difficult, costly, or impossible to reverse. Further, the degree and nature of any exterior deterioration, as well as the evidence of long term and potentially on-going neglect are also a factor in evaluating potential landmarks for their suitability for preservation or restoration. It is the opinion of the Planning and Development Department that the two-story brick building with the corner entryway appears to be structurally sound as viewed from the two visible walls of the exterior. However evidence of severe roof deterioration is visible through the first story windows. In 1949, a building permit was approved to rebuild part of a brick wall of the two story structure. Plans were not located to determine the extent of this work, however, it appears that a significant amount of the exterior walls were rebuilt or covered with a more contemporary red brick.<sup>6</sup> Another significant alteration was the replacement of original doors and windows with a more contemporary product.

As evaluated from the West Forsyth Street façade, the original part of the one-story building shows evidence of significant deterioration. In addition to stress cracks, some deterioration of the brick is evident particularly along the west corner of the building. The brick was manufactured from a soft gray material which has contributed to the deterioration. Also, parts of the masonry band above the windows and door openings have been reinforced with steel beams. Evidence of significant roof deterioration is visible through several of the bays. Contemporary metal columns have been placed on the interior to help support the roof system. Except for the large bays, the condition and age of the windows and doors of the one-story building were not determined due to being boarded.

If designated a local landmark, it is the stated intent of the property owner to have the buildings officially mothballed. Based on a general evaluation, mothballing of the subject properties will need to address the stability of the roof system, as well as make the buildings weather tight, properly secure the windows, doors, and bays, install motion detection security

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4 [www.ehow.com/info\\_7750147\\_history-cherocola-company.html](http://www.ehow.com/info_7750147_history-cherocola-company.html)

5 *Jacksonville City Directories*, 1914 – 1925.

6 *Jacksonville Building Permit Record*, #697, June 1, 1949.

lights, and the removal of any trash or debris from the interior and exterior. Other requirements would include the preparation of an engineer/architect's report on the buildings' structural condition, as related to the roof system and the exterior walls.

### **RECOMMENDATION**

Based on the findings of this report, the Planning and Development Department recommends that the Jacksonville Historic Preservation Commission **APPROVE** the designation of 801 – 805 West Forsyth Street (**LM-13-08**) as a City of Jacksonville Landmark.